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With music fans attending festivals like Bonnaroo and Coachella in record numbers, festival revenues have grown from very little a decade ago to over \$4.6 billion in 2011 (Grose, 2011). Americana music festivals are one such type of music festival currently enjoying increased popularity. The purpose of this dissertation is to understand consumption-related behaviors and experiences within the Americana music festival context. Thus, one of the primary goals of this dissertation is to understand the experience of the Americana music festival and to explore what this experience means for festivalgoers, fans, and the genre itself.

Four research objectives were developed to address this purpose: (1) to explore the Americana music festival experience, (2) to investigate the role of consumption in this experience, (3) to examine how the Americana music festival functions as a marketplace, and (4) to investigate the ways that Americana music festivals link to the local community. Americana music festivals are settings that allow the emotive, affective properties of the consumption process to emerge through moments of fun, enjoyment and leisure. However, thus far, no academic research has investigated the Americana music festival as a particular experiential consumption context. Likewise, although research exists on festivals in general, there are gaps in this literature specifically related to festival consumption behaviors.

An ethnographic approach was used to address the purpose and objectives of this study. Specifically, I immersed myself in the research by attending ten Americana music festivals conducting research in the field for a total of 33 days over the duration the festivals attended. Data collected consisted of interviews, fieldnotes and photographs. Data were analyzed to develop the thematic interpretations. Three thematic areas emerged that structure the interpretation: *Crafting the Festival*, *The Marketplace*, and *Experiencing the Festival*. Within each thematic area, dimensions of the meanings of the Americana music festival experience are examined.

Findings indicate that the Americana music festival is a transformative commercial offering that is created by organizers for consumers to escape and explore new experiences. Findings also shed light on how the Americana music festival inspires consumption that shapes individual and group identities. Lastly, findings elucidate the importance of stakeholder support necessary for Americana music festivals to be successful. Although, this study addresses several gaps in the literature, it also points to the need for further exploration of the experiential consumption facets of festivals in general and Americana music festivals in particular.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the undying love and support of my family, friends, and fellow colleagues. I would especially like to thank my wife, Michele, who supported my Ph.D. dream from beginning to end. I am grateful for the artists, music, and festivals that inspired me to pursue this monumental research endeavor.

As I move forward in my academic and personal journey, I will preserve all of their songs of faith, hope, and encouragement to help carry me along my way.

APPROVAL PAGE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As the sun begins to set on the festival grounds, the entire scene becomes electric as people gather to hear music, meet up with friends, stand in line for food and drinks, browse the clothing bazaars or chase their children across the open landscape. Electric and acoustic music from multiple stages can be heard along with shouts of patrons; the smells of food cooking and burning wood surround the festival; sights of dim lantern lights, colorful flags and bright clothing all combine and blend into a patchwork of sensory stimuli.

This account, taken from field notes while conducting preliminary research for this dissertation, describes a picture of the unique spectacle found at many modern-day Americana music festivals. A common form of cultural celebration, festivals are typically characterized as events that are associated with specific themes (e.g., a barbeque festival or Greek festival). Music festivals are one of the more popular types of festivals, particularly those that are held outdoors. Starting with the music festivals of the 1960s such as Woodstock and Monterrey, the popularity of outdoor regional music festivals has rapidly increased during the last few years.

According to Webster's (1983), the term *Americana* is used to describe studies of American culture. Americana can also refer to artifacts or a collection of artifacts related to the history, geography, folklore and cultural heritage of the United States (Reighley, 2010). As a form of music, Americana is a contemporary genre that reflects these facets of American culture, incorporating elements of various American music styles, including country, roots-rock, folk, bluegrass, and blues and resulting in a distinctive roots-oriented

sound (Dutton, 2006). Although there is a growing interest in Americana as a music genre, and indication of this interest is seen in high attendance levels at Americana music festivals, there is scant literature available about them. Thus, one of the primary goals of this dissertation is to understand the experience of the Americana music festival and to explore what this experience means for festivalgoers, fans, and the genre itself.

This chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section provides a background on the music festival, specifically the Americana music festival, and what takes place at this type of music festival. Second, a description of the dissertation purpose and objectives is provided. This is followed by a discussion of the methodological and theoretical considerations of the study. The chapter concludes with an examination of the scope and significance of the dissertation.

Background

Musical artists and music styles at festivals vary from heavy metal bands at festivals such as *Ozzfest*, to pure country artists at festivals such as *Countryfest*. While these festivals center on more mainstream commercial artists, Americana music festivals often highlight independent acts whose music does not fit comfortably in either the country or rock genre. With the burgeoning interest in the ‘roots’ of popular music styles, including the songs of Bob Dylan, Jerry Garcia, Bruce Springsteen and other musicians, as a genre, Americana has experienced growing popularity since the early 1990s (Skinner, 2006). The Americana Music Association (AMA) describes Americana music as,

Contemporary music that incorporates elements of various American roots music styles that live in a world apart from the pure forms of the genres upon which it may draw. While acoustic instruments are often present and vital, Americana also often uses a full electric band. (“What is Americana,” 2012)

Born out of an increasing interest in music outside of the more commercial rock and country formats, the genre of Americana was officially created in the mid-1990s, with the first Americana radio chart published on January 20, 1995 (Knapp, 2008). Gram Parsons, a guitar player, singer and songwriter that played with the *Byrds* before moving on to a solo career is considered an early Americana music pioneer. According to Erlewine (2010), Parsons saw his type of music as an alternative to country music, which he considered too formulaic and mainstream. As the music evolved, radio stations were deregulating and becoming more dependent on sponsors for support, resulting in an extremely commercialized format that left little room for independent artists or unique genres (Allen, 2010). As many music fans became disenfranchised with the mainstream, Americana music and subsequent festivals emerged to offer listeners the opportunity to enjoy these independent artists.

With the growing interest in the genre, festivals featuring Americana artists have become very popular in the U.S and U.K. Typically lasting from two to five days, an Americana music festival is usually held outdoors in a rural location. Most festivals occur during the early spring through the late fall. Featuring a diverse assortment of music, Americana music festivals host a variety of artists known for music of American origin. Well-known artists such as *Emmylou Harris*, *Jackson Browne* and the *Allman Brothers* often play at Americana music festivals, along with a multitude of other regional and

local bands that are not always as well-known, such as *Leftover Salmon*, *Old Crow Medicine Show* and *Trampled by Turtles*.

Most Americana music festivals are held in rural locations, across several acres of land, therefore festival goers usually camp in tents or recreational vehicles on-site or in nearby campgrounds. For example, Figure 1 depicts an aerial view of a setting for a four-day festival located in southwestern Virginia known as *FloydFest*. The figure shows the 80-acre layout, with multiple stages as well as vendors and recreational activity areas such as hiking trails, mountain biking and rafting. A multi-day Americana music festival like *FloydFest* may include 100 or more bands on multiple stages, playing sets of music from one to two hours, spanning a daily schedule that typically begins before noon and lasts until two or three the following morning.



Figure 1. Aerial View of the *FloydFest* Festival Site. (Source: www.floydfest.com)

In addition to the musical offerings, the festival site usually includes vendors selling a variety of products such as clothing, hats, jewelry, and camping gear as well as arts and crafts. Moreover, there are typically food and drink vendors offering an assortment of foods ranging from organically-farmed pork barbeque to handmade pizza baked in a wood fired oven, to locally grown vegetarian dishes and homemade desserts. Alongside the food and shopping, music festivals feature other basic amenities such as portable restrooms, security officers and medical assistance. As one program guide states:

For five glorious July days of the year, this quiet 80-acre plateau off the beautiful Blue Ridge Parkway is transformed into a temporary suburb of music aficionados. In addition to the food, shopping, and entertainment amenities, our festival ‘tent city’ comes complete with recycling and trash collection, sanitation and zoning issues, medical assistance, neighborhood security, and plain neighborly common-sense. (*FloydFest*, 2013)

Beyond the music, the Americana music festival encompasses products and services tied to the event, such as souvenirs, food and other goods for sale. Whether it is handmade clothing or handcrafted drinks, the idea of high quality, authentic goods and services is common, as those who are drawn to Americana are interested in American roots and seeking out goods and experiences with connections to them (Reighley, 2010). According to Reighley (2010), such goods evoke simpler times and feelings of nostalgia, and reflect consumer lifestyles defined by the quest for authenticity and substance as reflected by the Americana music genre. Relatedly, festivalgoers expect to be able to interact with the producers of the goods, such as talking with the farmers that grow the fresh food for sale at the festival. Americana music festivals provide an opportunity for

festivalgoers to purchase goods and services that reflect the high value they place on community and authenticity.

Along with being a venue for artists, vendors, and fans to enjoy being together, the Americana music festival provides economic benefits for the local community that supports it. Festivals interact with local economies and communities, and activities generated by festivals contribute to the principles of sustainable local economic development (Sundbo, 2004). Indeed, localities tourism in general and festivals in particular are considered to be important forms of economic development due to the considerable amount of income they generate (Getz, 2010). Moreover, festivals can extend the tourist season, generate revenue for state governments (Getz, 2002), and have a positive economic impact on the local economy by encouraging new and supporting existing businesses (Timothy, 1998).

Ultimately, festivals provide a particular kind of marketplace wherein consumption and community converge. Despite the importance of festivals for individuals and local economies, few studies exist that examine consumption experiences within the context of the music festival. Furthermore, no studies specifically examine such experiences within the context of the Americana music festival. Thus, another primary goal of this dissertation is to better understand consumption experiences within the festival context by focusing on the increasingly popular Americana music festival setting.

Due to their increasing popularity as a form of entertainment, festivals of all types, including Americana music festivals, are making a notable impact on the broader

communities in which they are held. In the next section, three key issues pertaining to the scope of the Americana music festival are discussed: (1) the Americana music festival setting, (2) consumption and the Americana music festival, and (3) the Americana music festival in community context.

The Americana Music Festival Setting

Like other types of music festivals, the Americana music festival offers fans a place to go where they can enjoy being around others of similar tastes and interests in music. In a recent study on folk music festivals, McIntyre (2003) found that next to being accessible and affordable, festivals that offer a wide range of entertainment generally attract the highest number of new visitors every year. Indeed, according to festival research, people attend music festivals for the thrill of physical proximity to the artist(s) and the overall atmosphere, neither of which can be experienced by simply listening to an audio recording (Earl, 2001; Oakes, 2003). This is also the case at Americana music festivals, most of which provide opportunities for fans to see and hear popular artists, many of whom will play multiple times over the course of the festival. Hence, a \$200 ticket for a three-day festival may be considered a “good value” in terms of the quantity of entertainment available.

Leenders, van Telgen, Gemser, and Van der Wurff (2005) contend that attendance at music festivals is a form of hedonic consumption, and one that arouses feelings of excitement based on the thrill of physical closeness to the artists, something that is not possible in an indoor music venue. As seating at festivals is usually General Admission, festival attendees have an opportunity to see their favorite artists “up close and personal.”

This sense of excitement is enhanced by the fact that the audience does not know what to expect, in that because it is a live performance, the band may play a variety of songs. As an experiential product, it is somewhat difficult to capture precisely what makes a music festival attractive to an audience; however, the emotional ties created between the audience and artists at the event largely help to create a positive overall experience. Lee, Lee, Lee, and Babin (2008) suggest that these emotional values play a critical role for consumers when deciding whether or not they will attend festivals.

In their early work on experiential consumption, Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) suggest that this type of consumption links with fun, fantasy and amusement. Consumers are attracted by the sensory stimulation, enjoyment and excitement offered by experiential products and services. The authors suggest that a consumption process that yields moments of fun, enjoyment and pleasure may be particularly pertinent in settings of leisure and entertainment (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Americana music festivals fit squarely within this notion. For example, as seen in Figure 2, festival attendees can sign up to swing on a trapeze that comes with a safety net as well as a qualified operator. Likewise, at Americana music festivals, one will often find specialized children's play areas, shaded beer gardens for adults, as well as wooded disc golf courses and nature trails, all of which provide an array of fun outdoor activities in addition to the music.



Figure 2. Trapeze for Use by Festival Participants.

Attending music festivals is a form of hedonic consumption, in that visiting festivals results in specific affective feelings, emotions, and sensations brought about by the entertaining and fun atmosphere. That is, attending a festival is an overall experience of pleasure, fun and enjoyment. Indeed, as festivals are typically located in rural settings and held during warmer months, most offer an idyllic experiential consumption setting, being surrounded by nature and scenic terrain. Performances take place in an open-air setting, where attendees can relax and enjoy the music as well as nature (see Figure 3).



Figure 3. Hillside Setting for a Festival Stage.

Americana music festivals help attendees to escape their normal, day-to-day routines in pursuit of hedonic consumption experiences. According to Iso-Ahola (1982), this is what makes leisure activities, or in this case, festivals, so appealing. A festival is a way to escape everyday stress through recreational opportunities in settings designed to provide fun, positive experiences. Americana music festivals are a way for music fans, friends and family to enjoy outdoor settings, local culture, food, activities and music in order to create a memorable overall experience. Because the experiential elements of

festivals seem to be what draws festivalgoers, such elements are the focus of this dissertation, including that of consumption.

Consumption and the Americana Music Festival

The festival setting plays a role in how attendees consume at the festival. In the festival setting, consumption can be both intangible (listening to music) and tangible (buying products from vendors). All festivals have a marketplace. At smaller festivals, it is common to see between 10-15 vendors, while larger ones may have up to 100 vendors. These marketplaces offer a variety of goods and services typically selected by festival organizers. Merchandise, such as clothing, jewelry, and compact discs may be directly or indirectly tied to the festival. For example, at one Americana music festival, one of the vendors was selling handmade dresses and hula-hoops (see Figure 4). Located in a marketplace area of the festival grounds, the clothing and other products were designed to evoke feelings of fun, while the name, *Clothes for the Soul*, suggests a positive, reflective experience. Likewise, merchandise such as t-shirts and hats, as well as compact discs related to the festival and its featured artists allow consumers to literally take a part of the festival home with them (see Figure 5).



Figure 4. Festival Vendor Selling “Clothes for the Soul.”



Figure 5. Vendor Offering Festival Related Merchandise.

As an experiential consumption setting, festivals may influence how attendees consume goods. That is, when consumption is tied to festive settings, feelings and emotions become important in consumers’ purchase decisions and evaluations of product attributes (Hawkins, Best, & Coney, 2004). For example, Matheson (2008) posits that

music festivalgoers are positively affected by the music and the emotions prompted by it, which, in turn affects their consumption behaviors within the festival setting.

One unique aspect of the festival marketplace is the time-based nature of the product offerings. Vendors set up their shops when the festival starts and are only on site as long as the festival lasts. Most vendors are mobile and tend to travel to multiple festivals throughout the “season” to earn a living. In a study of Bluegrass festival product vendors, Gardner (2004) characterized them as a mobile community defined by symbolic escape into non-traditional, place-based communities where they offer their wares. This notion of the mobile artisan is present at Americana music festivals, with many producing handcrafted goods in the winter to months to sell on the festival trail during the rest of the year.

Consumption and marketplace are distinct features of the Americana music festival scene. The setting encourages experiential consumption through a fun, festive environment and vendors are part of the overall hedonic atmosphere. Consumption at a festival provides economic support not just for the vendors, but also for the festival itself. In turn, a profitable festival benefits the surrounding community by drawing tourists who are looking to spend money on the experience and products related to it.

The Americana Music Festival in Community Context

An Americana music festival is more than just an event held at a certain place and time. A festival connects with the local community, going beyond the setting to support local businesses, volunteers from the local area, and often police and medical personnel from nearby towns. Whether held annually or bi-annually, most festivals seek to create a

sustainable business model that ensures the longevity of the event over time, and to do so requires collaboration between festival organizers and local communities (O'Sullivan & Jackson, 2002).

As many festivals are held in rural locations, they can be a boon for local economies. Neighboring towns can feel the short-term economic impact that festivals create through the hiring of local vendors and support staff. Moreover, many festivals support charitable causes that are often connected with local towns. A portion of the festival earnings might go back to the community to support such charities as local food banks, high school scholarships, and local art programs, many of which are seeking additional funding due to the loss of governmental or private support. Likewise, in rural areas faced with high unemployment, festivals can provide some temporary financial benefits through employment. Festivals not only provide economic support for the community, they offer an opportunity to promote social and environmental efforts that festivalgoers can get involved with and stay involved even after they leave the festival (Dore & Frew, 2000).

Sharpe (2008) recognized the potential to use the festival event as a forum for promoting a set of principles based in part on social and environmental responsibility. That is, using the festival not only to entertain, but also to “change things for the better” with regards to the environment and the community as a whole. For instance, at Americana music festivals, it is typical to see conservationist groups like *Greenpeace* and *Appalachian Voices* seeking to build their memberships among festival patrons. As another example, local food and produce is sold at Farmer's Markets at most festivals.

Local farmers gather to sell a variety of fresh fruit, vegetables and other farm products directly to festivalgoers, and, in turn, provide an opportunity to create an awareness of their products that endures after the festival is over. According to Dore and Frew (2000), such connections between festivalgoers and members of the local community reflect a growing trend at festivals in general.

By building connections with the broader community outside of the festival, festivals help to create a “place identity” focused on the preservation of local culture, pride of place, and economic development (DeBres & Davis, 2001). Ultimately, a festival can help promote a community’s identity. In this sense, festivals go beyond a simple three or four day event to create lasting connections with the community as a whole.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this dissertation is to understand consumption-related behaviors and experiences within the Americana music festival context. Four research objectives were developed to address this purpose: (1) to explore the Americana music festival experience, (2) to investigate the role of consumption in this experience, (3) to examine how the Americana music festival functions as a marketplace, and (4) to investigate the ways that Americana music festivals link to the local community.

Americana music festivals are settings that allow the emotive, affective properties of the consumption process to emerge through moments of fun, enjoyment and leisure. However, thus far, no academic research has investigated the Americana music festival as a particular experiential consumption context. Likewise, although research exists on festivals in general, there are gaps in this literature specifically related to festival

consumption behaviors. By examining the Americana music festival as a particular consumption setting, this dissertation will help to address major gaps in both the consumption and festival literature.

Methodological and Theoretical Considerations

To achieve the purpose and objectives of this dissertation, an ethnographic framework was employed. Ethnography is the most appropriate approach for this study, as it is commonly used to examine phenomena within society and culture (Sluka & Robben, 2007). Moreover, an ethnographic approach facilitated an in-depth understanding of the topic that is currently lacking in the literature. That is, previous festival studies have been predominantly quantitative in nature, primarily relying on survey methods to study the phenomenon (Getz, 2010).

The idea of ethnographic researchers going into the field means that they leave their own communities, institutional settings, and familiar behavioral and cognitive patterns to enter another social world—the world in which the research is to be conducted. In the process, the researcher learns what residents of the field already know—the language of the setting, the rules guiding social relationships, and the cultural patterns, expectations and meanings that people in the setting share (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). Moreover, Holloway, Brown, and Shipway (2010) suggest that researchers should be immersed in the event environment to better understand the phenomenon from an insider's point of view. Thus, for this dissertation, I took on the role of a participant observer and fully immersed myself in the festival community during data collection (Merriam, 1998). Through participant observation, I involved myself in

the community to gain a deeper understanding, while seeking to detach myself from the community “to construct the abstract reality” necessary (Sluka & Robben, 2007, p. 1). As a result, this dissertation sheds light on what it means to experience an Americana music festival from the perspective of festivalgoers while in the festival setting.

Because very little research exists on music festivals in general and Americana music festivals specifically, preliminary research was conducted at several Americana music festivals. Along with collecting observation data and conducting informal interviews, I established contacts with festival vendors, organizers and participants. In addition, I participated as a volunteer at two small festivals in Virginia in May and September of 2013 to establish a broader network of contacts for the dissertation data collection process. Findings of this preliminary research were then used to inform the development of the purpose and objectives of this dissertation.

As will be discussed in more depth in Chapter III, I attended ten festivals in the Southeastern region of the United States from May through October of 2014, for a total of 33 days in the field. Data collected in the field consisted of observations, photographs field interviews and recorded interviews. Based on the 2014 festival schedule for this region (posted on www.jambase.com), I determined there was sufficient opportunity to attend several Americana music festivals during this time frame. The festivals ranged from single-day to multi-day festivals that hosted a variety of Americana music artists. A range of sites were targeted, as I attended small-size festivals (~500 – 3,500 participants), mid-size festivals (~5,000 – 12,000 participants), and large-size festivals (~15,000 – 30,000 participants).

Much like the limited methodological frameworks employed to study consumption at festivals, there is limited use of theory to help explain the festival phenomenon. Indeed, according to Getz (2010), very little festival research uses theory or makes theory-based contributions. However, the research that has been done points to the potential for symbolic interaction (Blumer, 1969) and social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) as a means of explicating the Americana music festival as a consumption setting and experience. In this dissertation, I examined the festival within a sociological framework, specifically how consumption behaviors and experiences are explained by social identity, symbolic interaction and related theories.

Jenkins (2008) summarizes social identity as a theory comprised of the internalization of collective identifications that can help, for example, with understanding issues such as the transformation of individuals' psychological processes by group membership, the sense of positive distinctiveness or differentiation which the individual gains from being in a group, and the processes by which group membership can be understood and negotiated. Jenkins contends that social identity theory has not been widely used within marketing and consumer studies. Similarly, Cova, Kozinets, and Shankar (2007) further suggest that social identity helps explain how communities of various consumers form within music-related gatherings. This dissertation examines how social identity theory helps explain how Americana music festival consumers identify with one another in the festival context and what this identification means for understanding specific consumption behaviors.

Blumer (1969) referred to symbolic interaction as the distinctive social interactions that take place between human beings as interpreted through actions and mediated through symbols and meanings. Understanding the symbolic meanings attributed to the festival by consumers provides greater theoretical insight into the consumption process. For example, Field (1970) found that in some instances, groups responsible for the reform of cultural meaning are those existing at the margins of society (e.g., hippies, punks, or gays), and these groups invent a much more radical, innovative kind of cultural meaning. Understanding Americana music festival consumers and the festival experience sheds light on the social meanings associated with attending such festivals. Moreover, as Americana music festivals are an experiential consumption setting, such symbolic meanings are shaped through hedonic responses and an emphasis on aesthetic criteria (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Zaltman & Wallendorf, 1979). That is, Americana music festivals, like musical recordings, popular culture, and the performing arts, are associated with leisure activity, to which consumers attribute a substantial amount of symbolic meaning (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Furthermore, products like festival apparel and related festival goods and services present an opportunity to examine relationships between the festival and consumer identity. McCracken (1986) suggests groups, through their connections with social actions/rituals (such as festival attendance), assign consumer goods (such as clothing) with certain meanings. In this dissertation, understanding identity through the social actions of festivalgoers helps shed light on what consumption means in the Americana music festival context.

The use of symbolic interaction and social identity theory in this dissertation provides insight into consumer behavior within the festival setting. Overall, theory is used to help inform how consumption of products in the festival marketplace occurs, suggest related product meanings associated with the festival, and shed light on the behaviors that occur in the festival marketplace. Ultimately, these theoretical considerations assist in the development of a broader perspective on the role of consumption and marketplace in the Americana music festival setting.

Scope and Significance

As will be explained in depth within Chapter II, a review of existing research indicates several gaps related to topic of this dissertation. Getz (2008) describes the research on festivals in arts and entertainment as being centered primarily in market, product, socio-cultural or tourism perspectives, with much of the festival-related research focused on cultural festivals or sporting events, and the majority of research being done in the U.K. and Australia. According to Formica (1988), research related to event management and event tourism is limited, with the main areas of focus being (in order of frequency): economic impacts, marketing profiles of the actual festival, sponsorship, and festival organization. Additionally, Getz's (2010) research on festivals found that the most frequent topics of festival research were the economic impact of events (nearly 30%), social impact (just under 20%), event management (13.4%), and tourism impact (13%), with sporting events accounting for almost 60% of the studies, while "cultural events" accounted for 29%.

Previous research on festivals point to four specific areas of impact: (a) creating opportunities for innovative business models that enable economic development (Sundbo, 2004); (b) improving socio-cultural connections between festival participants and the local community (Small & Sheridan, 2005); (c) providing settings for understanding consumer behaviors and motivations to improve future festival offerings (Crompton & McKay, 1997; Mackellar, 2009); and (d) establishing sustainable practices to promote ecological awareness and 'green' products (Laing & Frost, 2010). These four areas are not only relevant for evaluating the economic implications of music festivals, but are also important for understanding consumer behavior during festivals, particularly how festivals offer a certain kind of marketplace that can only be experienced during the festival itself.

Music festivals are an important sub-field within event studies, and of particular interest to scholars in many disciplines because of the universality of festivals and the popularity of festival experiences (Getz, 2008). Live concerts and festival performances seem to be viable way to make a profit from music by means of ticket sales and other revenue streams, such as merchandise sales and sponsorship agreements (Maatjens, 2003). Music festivals draw a particular audience that attends based on the genre, one or more of the performers, and/or the atmosphere (Oakes, 2003; Shuker, 2001).

It is evident from previous literature that while there has been considerable development in the knowledge of events and festivals, many dimensions still require identification and exploration. Specifically, research that helps bridge the existing knowledge gaps between the Americana music festival and consumer behavior in the

festival consumption setting is important to the study of both festival research and consumer behavior. A deeper understanding of these dimensions would not only broaden the scope of knowledge, but would also provide useful managerial implications for festival stakeholders, including members of the local community, the festival organizers and festival vendors, as well as others associated with the festival.

In summary, this dissertation addresses the following gaps: (1) there is limited qualitative research on music festivals in general; (2) there is no research specifically on Americana music festivals; (3) there is a need to tie music festival consumption to consumer behavior research and specifically via the concept of experiential consumption; and (4) there is little theoretical basis in music festival research, thus, there is a need for studies on the topic that are informed by theory. Results of this dissertation research provide insight into the behaviors of Americana music festival consumers and Americana music festivals as a unique kind of marketplace. As a result, this dissertation not only builds on the existing festival literature, it has important implications for festival planners, marketers and local communities interested in the economic and social impact of Americana music festivals. Ultimately, this dissertation provides new perspectives on the way festivals inspire consumption, allowing for a better understanding of consumer behavior in the Americana music festival setting to emerge.

Summary

In this chapter, I introduced the dissertation topic by providing a description of the Americana music festival. Background information on the topic, comprised of three broad areas that include the setting of the Americana music festival, consumption within

the Americana music festival setting and the Americana music festival in the community context, was provided. The purpose and objectives of the dissertation were then explained. Methodological and theoretical considerations were discussed. Lastly, the scope and significance of the study were outlined. The next chapter presents a review of the literature pertinent to the topic of this dissertation.

CHAPTER II

THE LITERATURE THAT INFORMS THE RESEARCH

As introduced in Chapter I, the purpose of this dissertation is to understand consumption-related behaviors and experiences within the Americana music festival context. The objectives of the study are: (1) to explore the Americana music festival experience, (2) to investigate the role of consumption in this experience, (3) to examine how the Americana music festival functions as a marketplace, and (4) to investigate the ways that Americana music festivals link to the local community.

This chapter outlines existing research relevant to the topic of the Americana music festival as a consumption setting. This chapter is divided into three sections, beginning with discussion of general festival research, and specifically relative to the music festival. Second, the concept of experiential consumption is examined, particularly as it relates to consumer motivations for attending Americana music festivals. Third, literature on the meanings of experiential consumption is examined. In reviewing the pertinent literature, gaps and areas in need of investigation are discussed as a means of highlighting the need for this dissertation.

Festival Research

A broad array of literature exists on festivals spanning multiple disciplines. There are three primary topical areas within this literature: (1) festivals and economic impact, (2) socio-cultural aspects of festivals and (3) behaviors and motivations of festival

consumers. Each area will be discussed in turn. As an important sub-field of festival research, and of particular interest to scholars in many disciplines, music festival studies will be emphasized (Getz, 2008).

Economic Impact

A great deal of research related to festivals focuses on the area of event tourism and the economic and business aspects of a festival. Indeed, in a review of the festival literature, Getz (2010) found that of the 132 studies reviewed, 30% dealt with economic impacts of festivals. There is considerable research effort given to understanding what makes festivals successful financially and the key factors that must be present to support the economic viability of the festival itself. For example, Sundbo (2004) compared two rock music festivals in Denmark and found evidence that festivals can aid economic development. Specifically, findings of this study indicate that the festival's business infrastructure may be used as an innovative model of organization.

Additionally, Sundbo's (2004) study points to the ways that the management structure of the festival is highly entrepreneurial. Relying on dimensions of Pine and Gilmore's (1999) model for assessing the experiential economy, Sundbo (2004) compares the two festivals based on location decisions, organizational form, business culture, branding, administration, community associations, cooperative partnerships and business development strategies to show the potential for festivals as drivers of industry development. The findings of Sundbo's study have implications for understanding Americana music festivals because local entrepreneurs often organize them. Furthermore, organizers of Americana music festivals develop these festivals through grassroots

efforts, relying on cooperation among stakeholders, including volunteers and local community support such as medical and law enforcement, to create an infrastructure to support their operations. Understanding the factors that are needed for creating a successful festival infrastructure is important for ensuring a positive economic impact.

Although festivals are typically short-lived events, with some lasting two days while others up to one week, festival organizers, communities and other stakeholders are usually interested in the long-term picture of the event's future. Whether held annually or bi-annually, most are created with repeat performances in mind. O'Sullivan and Jackson (2002) explored festival sustainability factors and sought to develop business typologies that go beyond just profit. Their typologies include 'homegrown' or the local festival, the 'tourist-tempter' or the mid-size festival, and the 'big-bang' or large-scale festival. Comparing these three types of festivals, the authors focused on aspects of leisure participation, community involvement and environment that, together, create the festival success factors. Furthermore, O'Sullivan and Jackson (2002) assessed links with community, training opportunities created by the festival, local business partnerships and social responsibility to understand impacts on all festival stakeholders. Their study offers clear evidence of the extent to which economic benefit and community partnerships are key factors in determining the success of a festival.

Socio-cultural Aspects

According to the literature, socio-cultural aspects of festivals go beyond just the economic impact of the festival by considering the festival destination as well as the broader community. In the festival literature, socio-cultural impacts of festivals can

include negative (e.g., traffic congestion, negative perceptions of community, and behavior of festival attendees) as well as positive aspects (e.g., involvement with community, increase in tourism, and positive relations with attendees). Research by Small, Edwards and Sheridan (2005) focused on the impact of festivals relative to recreational opportunities offered, as well as how festivals meet community infrastructure needs, health and safety and act as a means of linking attendees with the host area. The authors highlight how interaction between festival participants and the festival destination influence the stakeholders involved with the festival. For example, the closer the residents of the community live to the festival site, the more likely they are to have positive perceptions of the festival (Small, Edwards, & Sheridan, 2005). However, the authors suggest this may not be true in the case of all festivals, and therefore posit that the impact of a festival is community-specific. In a similar study, Fredline and Faulkner (2001) revealed that positive perceptions of a festival among residents are more likely when they have a higher involvement in or identification with the festival theme.

Studies have also been conducted to understand the festival as a place or destination. This idea includes understanding how communities create “place identity” through marketing campaigns to focus on preservation of local culture and develop pride of place (DeBres & Davis, 2001). Such efforts are designed to promote the community and create connections between it and the festival participants. As an example, Gibson and Davidson’s (2004) study of Tamworth, Australia highlights how local residents and festival organizers promoted “rurality” and “country music” as aspects of popular culture to transform their town, ultimately developing a “country music” identity associated with

the place (the town of Tamworth). Through the efforts of organizers, government, country music promoters, major advertisers and musicians, the town of Tamworth deliberately constructed a place identity that connects the community with like-minded tourists.

Gibson and Davidson (2004) provide a model for understanding how festivals can create a “place identity,” which helps promote the festival, particularly in rural locations. Other festival studies have examined the short and long-term impact that establishing a place identity can have on the local economy. For example, Chhabra, Sills, and Cabbage (2003) studied two Scottish Highland festivals in rural North Carolina and concluded that the rural host towns saw a significant rise in local revenues for lodging, ethnic goods and food. Furthermore, the festival offered increased employment opportunities for vendors and local residents participating in the festival. Additionally, the festival attendees indicated they were highly likely to make repeat visits and tell others about the festival, thereby attracting repeat and new business that will ensure the sustainability of the festival for future years (Chhabra, Sills, & Cabbage, 2003).

Festival Consumers

Within the literature, festivals are situated as temporary spaces designed to take the individual out of the everyday. For example, Larsen and O'Reilly (2009) define music festivals as unique utopian settings where market, consumption, culture, and the human spirit come together. The authors identify five dimensions of utopia with respect to the festival: communitarian, carnivalesque, spiritual, political and economic. According to the authors, this utopia is a place where the beauty of society reigns over its

evils. While this idea of utopia is slightly exaggerated, other research has explored the notion of utopia relative to festival consumption, specifically Kozinets' study of the *Star Trek* subculture (2001) and the *Burning Man Festival* (2002), in as much as both festivals are constructed and consumed as utopias.

In his study of *Star Trek* fans, Kozinets (2001) examines the cultural and sub-cultural consumption meanings and practices of *Star Trek* fan clubs, conventions and Internet groups to understand the commercial and cultural impact of the television series. Kozinets sought to understand the connections between objects, images and texts from the show and the collective nature of consumption experiences among fans.

In a separate study, Kozinets (2002) explored the notion of communal consumption at the annual anti-corporate marketing *Burning Man Festival* to understand whether festivalgoers were able to truly distance themselves from the marketplace. Kozinets' research is based on four years of studying the festival on-line as well as attendance at the festival as a participant observer. His findings point to how a festival billed as anti-marketing still includes elements of consumption, albeit alternative forms like unbranded merchandise, which is offered in a temporal festival setting.

The consumption of live music, products and services available in the festival marketplace, along with the overall festival environment, are all factors that can drive consumption relative to a festival. As Larsen and O'Reilly (2009) suggest, further insight into music festivals may be gained by studying them as constructed utopias. In this sense, music festivals are structured by organizers and consumers and facilitated by capital. These constructed utopias are an integral part of the music marketplace, specifically the

music industry and its link to the experience economy (Larsen & O'Reilly, 2009).

Because of the focus on fun and enjoyment, the idea of a music festival as a utopian consumption setting may be particularly relevant to understanding the Americana music festival.

Festival research suggests that groups associated with a particular interest such as environmental protection, local food connections and mobile communities are emerging within the festival setting. Sharpe (2008) recognized the potential to use the festival event as a forum for promoting a set of principles based in part on social and environmental responsibility, thereby using the festival not only to entertain, but as a forum to promote social change. Furthermore, Getz (2010) suggests that environmental perspectives and trends should be included in the overall festival offering to promote ecologically sustainable tourism and green practices. Yet, in his literature review on festivals, Getz (2010) cites a clear shortage of academic articles on environmental concern. As one potential example, since music festivals by nature are held almost exclusively outdoors, the outdoor apparel product segment, particularly with environmental affiliations (e.g., Patagonia brand), is a topic that would benefit from additional research.

A rise in ecological consciousness among consumers and increasing demand for green products have led firms to begin offering green products and services (Chan, 1999). However, there is limited research on the idea of “green” as it surfaces during festivals. As described in Chapter I, local made foods and produce are present at many festivals and sold at festival “Farmer’s Markets,” where local producers gather to sell a variety of fresh fruit, vegetables and other farm products directly to festival consumers. Dore and

Frew (2000) emphasized a recent resurgence in interest in these types of markets on the part of both suppliers (farmers) and consumers (locals and tourists) in general, as well as a growing trend within the context of regional events and festivals.

Festivals are both temporal and mobile in nature. Yet, the mobile aspect of festivals is seldom considered in the existing research. Serious festival participants are repeat customers and travel from festival to festival in search of communal interaction. Gardner's (2004) ethnographic study of Bluegrass music participants in communities across twenty festivals establishes that like the festivals, consumer communities can be mobile. Such groups are concerned with inclusivity norms and the connection with the festival's physical setting. What this mobility means for festival-related consumption has yet to be examined in the literature.

Getz (2010) points out that while much research has been conducted on the festival motivations of economic impact and community impact, very little research exists that sheds light on consumers' experiences and the meanings they attach to consumption in the festival setting, particularly that of the music festival. This dissertation therefore allows for new knowledge to emerge relative to festivals in general and Americana music festivals in particular. The next section provides a discussion of literature on the topic of experiential consumption.

The Study of Experiential Consumption

Research on experiential consumption gained prominence in the early 1980s as researchers began to move beyond the notion that all consumers are logical thinkers that always make rational buying decisions. Instead, experiential consumption proposed that

consumers sometimes make decisions based on emotions and feelings. This “turn” in the research recognized that consumers make decisions based on the desire to achieve a particular experience, thereby necessitating a different view of consumers. Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) were among the first to suggest the importance of consumer research based on consumer fantasies, feelings and fun, and ultimately to propose the “experiential view.”

For Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), the experiential view of consumption is about consumption as the hedonic pursuit of immediate gratification or pleasure. Furthermore, the authors suggest that experiential consumption provides a basis for exploring hedonic motives in entertainment as well as leisure settings. The authors contend that experiential consumption is based on a subjective state of consciousness that allows consumers to associate symbolic meanings with hedonic responses and to assign aesthetic value to their experiences. Finally, Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) advocated understanding the total consumption experience, and doing so through the use of consumer narratives.

Researchers have since studied consumers in a variety of experiential settings including examples in river rafting (Arnould & Price, 1993) and baseball (Holt, 1995). However, there is limited research on experiential consumption at music festivals and none that specifically looks at it within the Americana music festival context. Arnould and Price (1993) explored the hedonic experiences of guides and consumers in a leisure setting of commercial multi-day river tours in Colorado. Through their use of multiple methods over a two-year period that included depth interviews, participant observation,

surveys and focus groups, the authors built on Holbrook and Hirschman's (1982) ideas to illustrate how consumers' rafting experiences could be based on the notion of the "extraordinary experience." Arnould and Price (1993) define the term "extraordinary experience" as the ultimate measure of the rafting experience, comparing pre-trip expectations with narratives collected during the trip to develop dimensions of experience. In reviewing affective consumer responses, narratives, and ritualistic aspects of the event, the authors connect the notion of fun with the overall consumption experience in a nature-based leisure context (Arnould & Price, 1993).

The second key example of experiential consumption research is Holt's (1995) study of baseball game spectators, whereby the author used interpretive methods to gain perspective on "how consumers consume" and "consumption as experience." Holt stresses the use of iterative techniques to gain a better understanding of consumers' experiences to develop categories of consumption. One category, which he termed "consumption as play," clearly relates to the nature of festivals and suggests a type of consumption experience that likely pertains to Americana music festivals as a type of fun socialization experience. That is, the author posits consuming as "play" to define how people use baseball not just for self-entertainment but also for interacting with others of a similar interest (Holt, 1995).

Making the connection between experiential consumption and festivals, Getz (2010) suggests that festivals embody emotional experiences leading to the pursuit of leisure as the intrinsic motivator. Related to the leisure aspect of festivals, existing research on festivals as a leisure pursuit considers leisure participants as those in the

mode of escape-seek (Iso-Ahola, 1982). That is, festivalgoers escape their personal world (personal troubles, etc.) and interpersonal world (work, family members) and seek personal and often hedonic rewards as well as feelings of satisfaction, interaction with others within friendly environments, or simply relaxation (Iso-Ahola, 1982).

Expanding upon this notion of serious leisure, Crompton and McKay (1997) investigated motivations for attending a large, multi-day cultural festival in Texas. Their findings indicate that motivations for festival attendance include: cultural exploration, novelty/regression, recovery/equilibrium, group association, and the pursuit of a friendly environment. The authors' findings provide evidence of multiple motives for festival attendance in connection with the hedonic nature of festivals. The authors conclude that many participants seek the affective qualities of festivals, specifically those related to fun and leisure.

From the standpoint of studying consumers within the music festival setting, this description of the consumer motivated by leisure clearly relates to Americana music festivals. Music festivals in general are experience-oriented and offer opportunities for serious leisure practitioners to escape their regular routines. Indeed, research on music festivals in general has revealed linkages between hedonic consumption and the music festival consumer. For example, Matheson's (2008) study of a Celtic music festival revealed important connections between the festivalgoer and the emotive properties of the music at the festival. That is, the festival audience connects with the music and festival environment based on the emotion and authenticity brought forth through the

music performed by the artists, indicating that music festivalgoers are motivated by emotions more than rational thinking (Matheson, 2008).

In a similar study, Mehmetoglu and Engen (2011) further explored experiential factors of consumption at a Norwegian music festival, called the Ice Festival, using the experience economy model (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). The authors assessed the festival through the experience dimensions of the model: escapism, esthetics, education and entertainment, and sought to understand how these dimensions play a role in consumers' festival experiences. Findings support Pine and Gilmore's (1999) idea that consumers are motivated by and willing to pay for consumption experiences and that they want to experience something based on feeling, learning, being and doing. Mehmetoglu and Engen (2011) point out that this type of festival research has been limited, yet emphasize the importance of further studies in similar experiential settings. Such research would not only shed light on the kinds of experiences festivalgoers seek, but on the meanings that they attach to these experiences. The next section includes a discussion of research on festival consumption meaning and its relation to consumers' social identity.

Consumption and Social Identity

In addition to exploring the Americana music festival as an experiential consumption context, the dissertation focuses on the meanings consumers ascribe to the festival experience. Holloway, Brown, and Shipman (2010) argue that more research is needed within the festival context, particularly in order to understand meanings that festival participants' assign to their experiences and interactions. The authors point to the need for the use of qualitative approaches in festival studies in order to explore these

meanings. Specifically, the authors suggest that the ethnographic approach would help to develop a deeper understanding of the overall festival experience. A festival's uniqueness and the emotions and enjoyment it evokes are likely to be important reasons why consumers are drawn to it. However, understanding the extent to which such reasons shape their overall experiences of the festival requires consideration of the broader, more theoretical implications of these experiences.

For example, Cohen (1993) supports an ethnographic approach to studying how individuals consume music within social contexts to develop a deeper understanding of behavior among groups of music consumers. In other words, much of the behavior of individual music consumers can be linked to the social component of music consumption. An ethnographic approach to research would allow for uncovering meanings derived from consumers' experiences in such contexts. Taking this idea a step further, this dissertation examines how social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and symbolic interaction (Blumer, 1969) theories help to explain consumption experiences at Americana music festivals. Both theories are discussed in turn.

Social Identity

A common theme seen in the consumer behavior literature as well as in leisure studies research is the symbolic meaning of an activity as an important representation of some aspect of the self and the need to affirm one's social identity (Dimanche & Sandahl, 1994). How the self is viewed within the festival context likely emerges from an individual's interactions with others and with the various dimensions of the festival experience. The significance of studying interactions for understanding festival

consumption may be best explained, therefore, in part by using Social Identity Theory.

The connections between leisure participation and social identity suggest a useful starting point to understand the social significance of festival experiences.

Social Identity Theory suggests that individuals categorize themselves into specific social groups, and according to Tajfel and Turner (1979), this categorization allows them to articulate their experiences within the social order. The theory consists of four components: social identity, social categorization, social comparison, and group distinctiveness (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social categorization is defined as the process of an individual ordering his/her social environment into groups. Social identity entails enhancing one's self-concept by gaining membership in a social group. Social comparison involves individuals comparing themselves to others based upon their group affiliations. Finally, group distinctiveness involves differentiating one group from other groups based upon unique group characteristics and norms. According to Social Identity Theory, as individuals confirm membership in a group, a sense of identification leads to practices that reinforce the group's interests as a whole (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

As it relates to consumption meanings in the festival realm, Jenkins (2008) suggests that social identity is one way to understand the importance of the transformation of individuals' psychological processes by group membership. In particular, this involves the sense of distinctiveness or differentiation that the individual gains from being in a group, along with the processes by which group membership is understood and negotiated. Cova, Kozinets, and Shankar (2007) explored the use of Social Identity Theory to explain how consumers form "tribal" communities around such

interests as sports, films and music. The authors posit that consumer tribes live within specific social settings and are concerned with consumption based on the self and the group collective to which they belong. Furthermore, the authors contend that consumption among these tribes often link products and experiences with social value (Cova, Kozinets, & Shankar, 2007).

In one of the few studies using Social Identity Theory in a music festival context, Cummings (2006) explores festivalgoers' social identity transformation at 25 "indie" (independent) music festivals in Australia. Cummings' research includes connections between Social Identity Theory and the concept of 'neo-tribes' (Maffesoli, 1996) to understand how festivalgoers use t-shirts to express their individuality as well as connect with other neo-tribes (groups) at the Indie music festival. Maffesoli (1996) describes neo-tribes as informal groups in modern consumer societies that transcend traditional structures (class, gender, etc.) and are focused on creating a social life based on shared consumption practices. These practices are often related to leisure and expressed through appearance. Cummings (2006) suggests that in the festival setting, specific styles of clothing worn by individuals not only establish their uniqueness but also connect them with other consumers who share similar consumption behaviors. Cummings contends that t-shirts build camaraderie among participants, establish individual identities within the festival, and create "linking images" with other tribes. The author posits that that neo-tribal consumers place importance on establishing linkages with other neo-tribes through tangible evidence (t-shirts) in 'anchoring places' (festival sites) to create collective experiences through similar interests in music and lifestyle.

Expanding on this research, Mackellar (2009) conducted a qualitative study of a multi-day themed festival in Australia that included music, nostalgic car exhibitions and organized dances. Mackellar used participant observation and interviews to focus on festivalgoers as serious leisure participants (Stebbins, 1996) and developed themes from the data to reflect their motives for attending and behaviors while at the festival. The themes include: specialized travel habits, lifestyle choices, group identity references, social interaction, fanaticism, and fixated consumption. Mackellar's study sought to explore serious leisure behaviors to understand how participants share in the festival ethos and use place (the festival) to establish social identity.

Mackellar's (2009) study also established a connection between serious leisure participants and the notion of the "fixated consumer" relative to clothing and memorabilia used to confirm group identity. Defined by extreme tendencies to find authentic clothing, music and other items, the fixated consumer seeks lifestyle choices that confirm his or her symbolic capital (Kane & Zink, 2004). Using these "reflective lifestyle" clothing choices, consumers are able to establish group identity and facilitate social interactions. A similar kind of group identity is seen at other types of festivals, and may therefore apply to exploration of Americana music festivals.

Symbolic Interaction

Blumer (1969) referred to symbolic interaction as the distinctive social interactions that takes place between human beings as interpreted through actions and mediated through symbols and meanings. Moreover, Blumer puts forth three basic principles of symbolic interaction consisting of: (1) humans act toward objects or

products on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things; (2) the meaning of such objects or products is derived from the social interaction that an individual has with others and society; (3) the ascribed meanings are developed through an interpretative process used by the individual in assessing the objects or products he/she encounters.

Levy (1959) suggested that all products, no matter how ordinary, can carry symbolic meanings. Solomon (1983) discusses the role of products as social stimuli, whereby symbolic products "set the stage" for the various social roles that people assume and the consumption of such products is designed to indicate and clarify the meaning of role behavior. Solomon contends that products can define the self, function as stimuli that cause behavior, facilitate role performance, and help establish "situational" self-images. Furthermore, the symbolic properties of products have meanings that are shared within a cultural context. Understanding the symbolic interactions of consumers can be useful to those looking to sell their products in a particular social context. For example, Leigh and Gabel (1992) illustrated how products are purchased for their symbolic significance related to important reference groups. Through the interaction between the individual, the reference group, and the product's symbolic appeal, marketers might enhance their product's relevance in the marketplace. In another study, Ligas and Cotte (1999) examined how social environments, marketing environments, and individual environments interact to negotiate brand meanings. The authors employed symbolic interaction theory to explain the process of creating brand meaning.

As related to music festival research, Denzin (2003) suggests that performance events, such as concerts, are important settings to understand how consumers ascribe

symbolic meanings to associated goods. Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) suggest that even products that are associated with a leisure activity, such as musical recordings of a live concert, could have symbolic meanings for consumers. Furthermore, Dimanche and Samdahl (1994) suggests the need for merging leisure studies and consumer behavior as a basis for understanding the meanings that individuals assign to leisure activities. The authors stress the importance placed on symbolic purchases of leisure-related goods and services, and proposed that symbolic interaction can be used to link individual and group identities in the leisure context. As it relates to the Americana music festival, consumers within the setting of the festival may ascribe meanings to the goods and services purchased at the festival (i.e. a t-shirt that allows the consumer to express to others interest in the festival or a particular music act at the festival). Viewing consumption within the festival setting through the lens of symbolic interaction theory will shed light on the symbolic meanings the consumer ascribes to the festival and the goods and services available in its marketplace.

The last decade has seen major growth in music festivals locally, regionally, and nationally that will likely continue to occur over the next decade (Knopper, 2012). This growth presents an important research opportunity for understanding the dimensions of the Americana music festival itself, exploring experiential consumption in the Americana music festival setting, and examining the meanings of the Americana music festival experience. The review of extant literature points to areas in need of further research that directly relate to the purpose and objectives of this dissertation. At the same time, the review highlights the lack of research on the topic of the Americana music festival,

including how it functions as an experiential consumption setting and the kinds of consumption-related behaviors and experiences that occur within it.

Integration of Key Concepts

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, four research objectives were developed to guide this dissertation: (1) to explore the Americana music festival experience, (2) to investigate the role and meanings of consumption in this experience, (3) to examine how the Americana music festival functions as a marketplace, and (4) to investigate the ways that Americana music festivals link to the local community. As highlighted in Figure 6, these objectives are linked by the interrelationships between experiential consumption experiences in the Americana music festival setting, the meanings attached to these consumption experiences, and the impact of the Americana music festival on the local community that form the basis of the conceptual framework. As depicted in the figure, two-way arrows link the setting with consumption and the local community, each of which was examined through the literature.

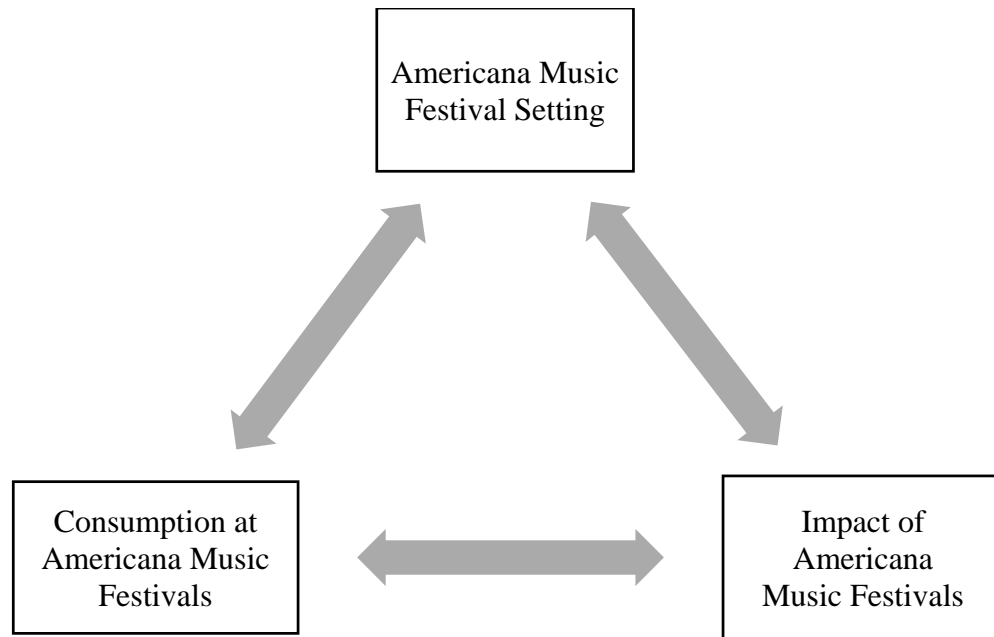


Figure 6. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework guides the dissertation research in several ways. First, as the literature suggests, consumption extends beyond rational decision-making and is often based on affective motivations and/or emotions (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Thus, the framework provides a context for exploring the question: *How does the notion of experiential consumption help to explain consumer behaviors and experiences within the Americana music festival marketplace?*

Second, the impact of the Americana music festival is examined from an economic, socio-cultural, and community perspective via the framework. As the literature suggests, festivals not only impact festival stakeholders, but also the broader community in which they are held (O'Sullivan & Jackson, 2002; Small, Edwards, & Sheridan 2005, Sundbo, 2004). Thus, the question, *what does consumption in the festival setting mean for festival impact?* is explored.

Lastly, the question, *how do consumers identify with others through consumption in the festival setting?* is examined through the festival marketplace as well as meanings ascribed to products and services consumed within it. Festivals, like Americana music festivals, are places where individuals can gather with others who share similar interests, such as the particular genre of Americana, as well as issues that relate to the products available in the festival marketplace (e.g., green products, Farmer's markets, environment-related organizations). Thus, understanding consumption behaviors and experiences within the Americana music festival setting entails considering the broader impact of the festival as a whole.

The interplay between the three core concepts of setting, consumption, and community impact create a dynamic framework within which the purpose and objectives of this dissertation can be addressed. As a result, broader understandings of what festivals mean for consumer behavior and, conversely, what consumer behavior means for festivals, can be achieved.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the literature relevant to the topic of this dissertation. Specifically, the areas of festival research and experiential consumption were discussed along with applicable theoretical approaches. Gaps within the literature were highlighted relative to the goals and objectives of the present study. The conceptual framework used to guide the study was then outlined. In the next chapter, methodological framework and methods used to collect data are explained.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this dissertation is to understand consumption-related behaviors and experiences within the Americana music festival context. To address this purpose, four research objectives were developed: (1) to explore the Americana music festival experience, (2) to investigate the role of consumption in this experience, (3) to examine how the Americana music festival functions as a marketplace, and (4) to investigate the ways that Americana music festivals link to the local community.

As discussed in Chapter I, an ethnographic perspective was used to collect data within the context of the Americana music festival. This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the research design and is comprised of three parts. First, a discussion of ethnography as interpretive methodology is provided. Specific methods used to collect data are then described, along with the discussion of the participant sample. Lastly, a discussion of the approach to analysis and interpretation is provided.

Ethnography as Interpretive Inquiry

The purpose and objectives of this dissertation were addressed through an interpretive methodological approach. Interpretive inquiry allows for deep understanding to evolve through a focus on the subjective or “lived” experiences of individuals (van Maanen, 1982). Likewise, interpretive inquiry permits a focus on understanding the meaning individuals assign to their actions and experiences (Hultgren & Coomer, 1989).

By interacting with participants in the festival setting, an understanding of what it is like to experience a festival, what this experience means, and the role of consumption within it can be better understood.

Ethnographic fieldwork is one approach to interpretive research. The conduct of ethnographic fieldwork across a diverse range of social worlds is a distinctive characteristic of ethnography as a discipline (Atkinson et al, 2001). Within the ethnographic setting, the researcher is the primary instrument of the data collection, therefore, meaning is understood by the researcher's immersion in the environment of the participants (Spradley, 1979). Ethnographic research relies primarily on observation and interaction to allow the researcher to participate – whether overtly or covertly – in people's daily lives (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983).

Immersion in the research setting is what sets ethnography apart from other qualitative approaches. The idea of ethnographic researchers going into the field means that they leave their own communities, institutional settings, and familiar behavioral and cognitive patterns to enter another social world—the world in which the research is to be conducted. In the process, they must learn what residents of the field already know—the language of the setting, the rules guiding social relationships, and the cultural patterns, expectations and meanings that people in the setting share (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999).

Through an ethnographic approach, in this dissertation, I immersed myself in the Americana music festival community first-hand to gain a deeper understanding of it, yet also sought to detach myself from it, which is necessary for interpretations of the

participants' realities (Sluka & Robben, 2007). To this end, I took on the role of participant observer, fully immersing myself in the festival community during data collection but doing so as a researcher (Merriam, 1998). That is, my role was made obvious in the setting. The guiding questions for the data collection in the field included: *what is the role of consumption within the Americana music festival?* and *how does this consumption shape the festival experience?* In the next section, I outline the data collection process as well as methods.

Data Collection

As discussed briefly in Chapter I, for the dissertation data collection process, I attended a total of ten Americana music festivals within a 300-mile radius of Greensboro, NC, from May through October 2014. The festivals ranged from single-day to multi-day Americana music festivals that hosted a variety of Americana music artists. A range of sites was targeted, as I attended small-size festivals (~500 – 3,500 participants), mid-size festivals (~5,000 – 12,000 participants), and large-size festivals (~15,000 – 30,000 participants). Eight of the ten festivals were multi-day festivals and all featured music associated with the Americana genre.

Table 1 provides details of the festivals that I attended. Shown in the table are the festivals attended, years of operation for the festival, size of the festival, festival location, attendance, festival duration and business type (for-profit/non-profit) of the festival.

Table 1. Festival Information

Festival	Years of Operation	Size	Location	Attendance	Duration (Days)	For Profit (P)/Non Profit (NP)
Rooster Walk	7	Small	VA	2,500-3,500	4	NP
Shining Star	3	Small	VA	800	1	P
Bushels & Barrels	3	Small	VA	500	1	NP
The Big What	4	Small	NC	1,000-1,200	3	P
Front Porch	7	Small	VA	800-1,000	4	NP
Aiken	11	Mid-size	SC	8,000	3	NP
Shakori Hills	13	Mid-size	NC	5,000-7,000	4	NP
FloydFest	14	Mid-size	VA	12,000	4	P
Lockn'	3	Large	VA	25,000-30,000	4	P
Americana Music Festival	16	Large	TN	15,000	5	P

Fieldwork

I immersed myself in each festival, and remained in the field for a total of 33 days over the duration the festivals attended. Merriam (1998) explains that a key characteristic of ethnographic research is participative fieldwork, wherein the researcher must physically go to the people, setting or site in order to observe behavior in its natural setting. Observation data are typically collected through fieldnotes to capture the interactions, events and activities within the setting under observation (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

McCall (2006) characterizes fieldwork in terms of the research context, and asserts that it is based on three characteristics: (1) field studies are typically non experimental and utilize observational studies; (2) the time spent in the field collecting data can be separated from other activities not performed in the field such as design, analysis and write-up; and (3) fieldwork includes the phenomenon of reflexivity, whereby the researcher is the observer and a central part of the subject matter itself (p. 4). The researcher in the field seeks to gain an insider's perspective and to view the setting from multiple points of view simultaneously.

Participant Observation

As an observer, one's role in the field may vary. Adler and Adler (1987) contend that there are different roles, from participating yet maintaining distance between self and members (peripheral membership), to assuming a membership role but retaining one's research identity (active membership), to completely "going native" becoming a fully committed member (complete membership). As I attended each festival as a full participant but maintained my identity as a researcher, I took on the active member role throughout the data collection process.

As a researcher, being an active member in the field naturally implies that he or she is the central figure in observing activities, settings and human conditions in the field. Merriam (1998) explains that observation is the best research tool to use when an activity, event, or situation can be observed first hand, when a fresh perspective is desired, or when participants are not able or willing to discuss the topic under study.

Central to observation is the fact that it must begin to explain basic ethnographic questions about the setting, activities, behavior and communication among participants. Observation is learning through personal experience, which includes observing and experiencing the event or phenomenon. However, Gans (1999) emphasizes the personal aspect of placing the researcher clearly in the field and cautions the researcher on over-identification with the group being studied.

Within the Americana music festival, I observed the physical setting, the people and the activities that were happening in the setting and captured these observations through written fieldnotes. The goal was to understand the festival experience as it was happening by giving consideration to consumption behaviors and experiences within the festival marketplace and how the festival impacts the broader community.

Fieldnotes

Field notes are data collected through observation in the field. Lofland and Lofland (1984) stress that notes taken in the research setting should follow a logical progression, going from (1) mental notes that orient your mind to the task of remembering details of the setting, to (2) jotted, brief phrases to jog your memory, and then (3) full field notes that can be coded and analyzed after the fieldwork has been completed.

In the case of this dissertation, my field notes were used to describe, note observations, and sketch the primary components of the festival setting. Lofland and Lofland (1984) highlight the important discipline of writing the notes down promptly after the observation day and point out the fact that these notes should include concrete

details that are free from interpretation. Known as substantive field notes, these notes are written in a set time and place and should include date, time, location and details of the participants and events (Burgess, 1982). Additionally, reflective fieldnotes were used to record personal experiences and ideas related to the data collected during the fieldwork process. These reflective fieldnotes provided a place to record my personal perspectives on what I observed within the festival setting (Burgess, 1982).

Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011) suggest that the writing of fieldnotes has four implications for the participant observation process: (1) what is observed and ultimately treated as “data” or “findings” is inseparable from observational processes; (2) in writing field notes, the field researcher should give special consideration to the people studied; (3) contemporaneously written notes are an essential grounding and resource for writing broader, more coherent accounts of other lives’ and behaviors; (4) field notes should detail the social and interactional processes that make up people’s everyday lives and activities (p. 58). By keeping both substantive and reflective fieldnotes, this data collection technique allowed me to capture observations and reflect on my experiences while in the field.

In Depth Interviews

Although field notes provide a large volume of detailed data from the field, further clarity may be required regarding what has been observed. Interviews allow for follow up and are characteristically used in the field as a means of providing an additional level of depth to the observation data. Moreover, though observation is the most common method employed within the ethnographic approach, there may be factors

that cannot be directly observed – such as feelings, thoughts, and intentions, that are best accessed through dialogue with an individual.

Interviewing is one of the most frequently used methods of data collection in qualitative research (Merriam, 1998), and particularly when a researcher seeks to understand meanings that individuals ascribe to their experiences. Within ethnographic research, interviews may be informal, such as general conversations and storytelling between participants and the researcher (Weiss, 1994). Ideally, one of the aims of interviewing is to build rapport that allows for authentic discourse between the researcher and the participant (Weiss, 1994).

The details that individuals ascribe to the world around them may also be challenging to grasp solely from observation. Thus, the interview helps the researcher to gain deeper insight from the participants (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). According to Merriam (1998), three types of interviews that a researcher can use are: structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, and informal interviews. Structured interviews follow detailed guides and questions to be followed so rigidly that they are often designed as an “oral survey” (Merriam, 1998). Semi-structured and informal interviews take a different approach and include some structured questions, but also have less structured questions that make the interview more like a conversation (Merriam, 1998). In contrast, informal interviews have little structure and questions often evolve during the interview. An important aspect of the interview relates to how the questions are designed. As such, questions should provide guidance on what to ask and of whom (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

The central questions facilitate staying on topic as well as provide latitude for guiding the discourse of the interview as it emerges.

In this dissertation, I conducted informal and semi-structured interviews in locations that were comfortable and convenient for the participants. As festival settings are bound by location, most interviews were conducted in the field setting. These interviews were audio-recorded and an IRB approval consent form was provided to the participant (see Appendix A). Data collection focused on all of the roles within the setting, including: festivalgoers, festival organizers, festival vendors and performers. Interview questions depended on the nature of the role. For example, interviews with festivalgoers focused on the festival experience, the types of products they consume, their activities during the festival, etc. Interviews with festival organizers covered festival goals and strategies as well as the development of the festival over time, especially its role relative to the local community. Interviews with festival vendors covered motivations for attendance, target consumers, products sold, and goals for festival sales. Lastly, interviews with performers covered goals for performing at the festival, involvement with the festival, and interactions with festivalgoers. The complete interview schedule is included in Appendix B. As field interviews were shortened due to the nature of the festival, more informal interviews lasted on average 20 minutes in length, while the semi-structured interviews were forty-five to ninety minutes in duration.

Visual Documentation

Photographs were used to complement the field notes to add to the overall richness of the ethnographic data collected. Photographs generally provide detailed

information relative to observation and can help present interconnections between the participants, setting, and enhance the written field notes (Peñaloza & Cayla, 2006). In fact, Peñaloza and Cayla (2006) advocate using visual documentation as a means to better capture the important interactions within the field.

In this study, photography was used to document activities and behaviors observed during the festival. It is important that the researcher capture and annotate all photos to record the time, place and setting. Banks (2007) clarifies the role of photography in ethnography, suggesting that a photo is not merely documentation, in that the researcher may in fact have underlying and even unconscious motivations for creating the visual image. Likewise, Hockings (2003) supports the use of photos for capturing observations that typically go unseen or unnoticed due to restrictions of time and space, to show what is happening in the field beyond the ordinary. Moreover, Pink (2007) stresses the use of photographs as a visual recording method to maintain reflexive awareness that informs the fieldwork. Visual documentation highlights the researcher's representation of a particular point of view in the matter. Thus, the key to successful photographic research is an understanding of the social relations and subjective agendas through which photos are produced and discourses through which they are made meaningful (Pink, 2007).

Within the festival setting, I sought to capture visual images reflective of the purpose, objectives, and guiding questions of the study, such as the festival setting and surroundings, marketplace and product offerings, activities in the festival setting and the festival participants. The photos were then used to supplement the texts and visually

document the festival experience. As each setting varied from festival to festival, it allowed for comparison between festival sites.

Participant Selection and Sample

As mentioned earlier, I attended a total of ten Americana music festivals. Data collection included 20 field interviews and 15 formal in-depth interviews with a variety of participants across the festivals, including festivalgoers, organizers, vendors, and performers. This variety allowed for a wide-ranging perspective on activities and experiences that comprised the festival environment. Gaining access to participants in the setting was a key step in the data collection process, therefore maintaining a flexible attitude in the field concerning the approach to meeting participants was important (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

A purposive sample (Mason, 1996) was used to select individuals in the festival setting, specifically individuals who can provide their experiences of the festival related to consumers, the festival marketplace, and the broader community. A variety of festivalgoers, festival vendors, festival performers and festival organizers were recruited. Table 2 presents a summary of the participant information and highlights participant age, gender, occupation, role and the names of the festivals they have been involved with as volunteers, vendors, organizers or festivalgoers. Most participants provided their first names and/or initials. In some cases, their own pseudonyms, such as festival nicknames, were used (e.g. Shaggy).

Table 2. Participant Information

Name	Age	Gender	Occupation	Role	Festival Involvement
Anna	26	F	Grad Student	Festivalgoer	RW, Others
Big What Camping Neighbors*	28-39	2 M, 3 F	Working Professionals	Festivalgoers	BW
Bob	52	M	Engineer, Guitar Vendor	Vendor	Multiple
Burro/Bryce	28	M	Engineer	Festivalgoer, Volunteer	BB, SH, RW, FP, FF
Cecil	38	M	High School Principal	Festivalgoer, Volunteer	FP, RW, Others
Chris O.	32	M	Festival Organizer	Security & Site Operations	FP
Chris P.	32	M	Organizer, Coffee Shop Employee	Festival Founder	FP
Shaggy*	49	M	Unknown	Festivalgoer	Multiple
Fern*	42	F	Homemaker	Festivalgoer	A
George*	45	M	Unknown	Festivalgoer	Multiple
JB	30	M	Full-time Organizer	Festival Founder	RW
Jimmy	56	M	Dentist	Festivalgoer	Multiple

Name	Age	Gender	Occupation	Role	Festival Involvement
Joanie	36	F	Non-Profit Employee	Festivalgoer	L, FF
Jordan*	54	M	Festival Organizer	Founder	SS
Katie	28	F	Self Employed	Vendor Manager	FP
Kelley	49	F	Marketing Executive	Vendor - Chaco	Multiple
LK*	56	M	Independent Business Owner	Festivalgoer	Multiple
Lockn' Camping Neighbors*	20s	6 M, 2 F	Students	Festivalgoers	L
Sam	45	M	IT	Festivalgoer	FF, L, RW, FP
Samuels, J.*	48	M	Associate Professor	Lecturer	AMA
Sandy	55	F	Music Store Owner	Festivalgoer	Multiple
Sarah	28	F	Organizer, Reynolds Homestead Employee	Festival Organizer. Public Relations	FP, BB
Stafford	50	M	Community College - Statistics Professor	Festivalgoer	M, RW, FP, RW, Others
William*	32	M	Festival Founder	Operations & Marketing	RW, SH, Others

Note. 1. Festival key: RW (*Rooster Walk*), BW (*Big What*), BB (*Bushels and Barrels*), SH (*Shakori Hills*), FP (*Front Porch*), M (*Merlefest*), A (*Aiken*), L (*Lockn'*), SS (*Shining Star*). "Others" included but were not limited to: Merlefest, Bonnaroo, Telluride, and other regional festivals. 2. "Multiple" indicates that the participant attended many festivals in this study as well as others. 3. * Indicates field interview.

Building initial relationships with individuals who are considered to be guides or informants is a common ethnographic practice that helps establish the researcher's entry into the field. According to Calhoun (1992), access to research settings can be gained through negotiations with highly visible and respected individuals who hold positions of rank, authority, or respect among others in the group. As such, participants were recruited through referrals, gatekeepers, as well as guides and informants in the field of study. Each is discussed in turn in the following sections.

Referrals

One approach to participant recruitment is to make contact through one's immediate sphere of influence. Vallance (2001) supports this notion by suggesting a *referral approach* by considering one's friends and social networks in seeking to gain introduction into the group the researcher intends to study. In the present study, I used referrals in order to expand the scope of participants. For example, I asked those who I was familiar with to volunteer and/or suggest other potential participants. For example, having met a particular festivalgoer at a past festival when conducting preliminary research, I would ask this participant if there were other organizers, festivalgoers, vendors or artists that they may refer that would be interested in being a participant in this research.

Gatekeepers

The idea of recruiting participants through gatekeepers is based on establishing a relationship with the "keeper" of the access to the setting and individuals in the field of study. Hagan (2006) defines gatekeepers as people that hold a pivotal position in the

hierarchy or group. Although gatekeepers may not be high up in the hierarchical ranking, they are nonetheless in positions that could either facilitate or hinder the researcher's ability to gain access. For example, a festival organizer may be the gatekeeper within the festival setting.

In this study, I sought to establish relationships with such individuals in order to build trust within the setting and thereby gain greater access to participants. For example, after interviewing one of the organizers from the Rooster Walk festival, I inquired about vendors that may be interested in participating in an interview. In most cases, the organizers were forthcoming and provided vendor contacts. However, not all vendors were responsive as many were busy traveling and actively working during the festival season.

Guides and Informants

Lastly, access to participants was established through guides and informants. Berg (2007) defines guides as indigenous persons found among the group and setting to be studied. Much like the gatekeeper, once trust and rapport are established, guides and informants can be assets in providing greater access within the group as well as suggestions or referrals for members outside the group. In this case, as interviews were conducted, I sought to establish connections with those who played active roles in various aspects of the event, such as festival organizers, managers, and those who help maintain the festival setting. For example, I asked festivalgoers if they knew of other festivalgoers who may want to participate in the research. This process worked well on some occasions as many referred other festivalgoers that they felt might be interested. While many of the

referrals resulted in field interviews, only a few participants agreed to take the time for a recorded interview.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

After data collection was completed, I used Spiggle's (1994) suggestions for data analysis and interpretation to develop thematic interpretations from which meaning could be derived relative to the purpose of this study. Such operations include data characterization, abstraction, comparison, iteration, and refutation to develop thematic interpretations of the ethnographic data (Spiggle, 1994). These interpretations were then related back to the concepts important to the study to understand the meanings of the Americana music festival experience.

To begin the analysis process, field notes were typed, photographs were annotated and all interviews were transcribed verbatim. Then, field notes and interview transcripts were examined alongside the photographs to understand meanings that emerged from the data relative to the research objectives (Clifford, 1986). According to Spiggle (1994), there are two essential activities that are involved in inferring meaning from qualitative data: analysis and interpretation.

Analysis involves classifying and describing data through several key operations: categorization (classifying and labeling groups of data), abstraction (grouping previously categorized data into more general categories), comparison (assessing the difference and similarities within the established categories), dimensionalization (developing deeper specific characteristics and dimension of the categories), integration (identifying the relationships between the categories and theoretical frameworks), iteration (moving back

and forth between various research stages), and refutation (empirically examining the established categories and conceptual framework) (Spiggle, 1994). As an outcome of analysis, interpretation involves understanding and assigning meaning to the data. That is, the researcher identifies the abstract concepts that emerged from the research and translates these concepts into more familiar terms (Spiggle, 1994).

I interpreted the data in order to develop and assign meanings to the findings. I analyzed my field notes, transcriptions and photographs, observations and other artifacts by first compiling all of the data to form the whole representation for each festival. Transcripts were then coded to highlight commonalities in the data across participants and festivals. I then began dissecting the data to determine common themes that would form the parts of the interpretation. Within each theme, I analyzed the dimensions of the data to develop connections across the data. Throughout this process, I purposely stressed the use of data to support and inform the theme. I conducted this process iteratively to continue to develop each theme, adding pertinent data to support it, and removing data that did not fit. I continued this process until I achieved a saturation effect for each theme to ensure that data fully informed and supported each theme. The thematic interpretations of the data comprise Chapters IV, V, and VI.

Lastly, the most critical step of analysis and interpretation involves integration. Integration means conveying the relationship between the meanings discovered and the broader theoretical issues guiding the study (Spiggle, 1994). Guided by the conceptual framework and using the thematic interpretations, I established connections between research objectives, existing literature and the theoretical considerations. My goal was to

induct the large amount of data collected into a comprehensive, integrated interpretation of meanings that reveal the implications of the festival experience. I achieved this by relating the thematic interpretations back to the theoretical basis proposed for this study, wherein I looked for patterns across the data. This discussion is presented in Chapter VII. Implications of the theoretical and thematic discussions are then outlined in Chapter VIII.

Summary

In this chapter, the interpretive methodological framework of the study was discussed. The ethnographic approach, specific data collection methods, and the participant sample were described. Lastly, the approach to data analysis and interpretation was presented. In the next chapter, the first thematic area of interpretation is presented.

CHAPTER IV

INTERPRETING THE AMERICANA MUSIC FESTIVAL PART I: CRAFTING THE FESTIVAL

An Americana music festival is the culmination of months of effort by festival organizers, volunteer staff, and community stakeholders. Interpretation of the data collected reveals that organizers of Americana music festivals strive to create the ultimate festival experience, or what can be characterized as the ‘festivalscape collective.’ They do this to attract both new and repeat festival consumers while continuously seeking to strengthen relationships with their host communities in order to create momentum for continued growth. In this chapter, four themes emerging from the data illustrate the process of crafting the ultimate outcome: (1) *Festival Ideation*, (2) *Festival Organization*, (3) *Festival Orchestration*, and (4) *Festivalscape Collective*.

Once the idea of a festival is conceived, the act of producing a successful and sustainable Americana music festival requires long-range planning, coordinated work effort, capital resources, and buy-in from community stakeholders. All parties are involved in the intricacies of organizing, orchestrating, and creating the ‘stage’ from which the festival will emerge. In line with this, the participants in this study who were specifically involved with festival organization tended to have entrepreneurial natures. Each had experience with creating successful festivals that have been in existence for several years.

As discussed in Chapter III, the festivals included in this study are categorized by location, attendance, duration, size, and business type. Although many share similar operating characteristics (e.g., fan-base, music genre), some differences exist, specifically relative to scale, years in operation, management structure, and degree of community engagement. These commonalities and differences that surfaced help to shape each theme. In each case, the festivalscape collective that is established through ideation, organization, and orchestration is primarily designed to provide a temporary space for consumers to enjoy the experiential offerings of the Americana music festival.

Festival Ideation

The stories of many of the Americana music festivals included in this study seem to mirror those of other kinds of entrepreneurial ventures. That is, they began as a relatively simple idea that evolved into a formal business. This “entrepreneurial” kind of origin, or growing a business from idea to full-scale operation, is an overarching trait among many of the festivals in this study, regardless of festival size or primary profit motive. While many have their origins in motives designed to help community causes (i.e., a non-profit fundraising event), such motives are not the case for all. Some are organized just to make a profit, while others support the host community or specific charities through the festival itself or by providing space for non-profits to be represented during the festival.

With the exception of the largest festival, *Lockn’*, all of the festivals had very modest beginnings. Typically, the festival started as a small event or party with a group of friends and family that was in honor of a cause, possibly funded by a few organizers

and a handful of artists that are paid minimally. Yet from these humble beginnings, all of the festivals have progressively expanded. Each festival began as an idea among its organizers, who are commonly comprised of a small team of people that ultimately functions as the leadership team of production personnel to collectively manage the particular festival.

For example, one of the smaller festivals, *Rooster Walk*, began when the founders decided to hold an event honoring friends that passed away at a young age. In addition, they wanted to link their festival with supporting a charitable cause important to the particular community host. As JB, the co-founder and principal of the *Rooster Walk* festival described:

JB: Initially it started as an idea to remember WS and EP who are two really close friends that we had grown up with since the time we are in preschool or kindergarten, that passed away way too soon and too young... We had remained really, really close with them all the way through college and young adulthood. You know, the reason we liked a music festival to honor our friends, we knew they liked to have a good time, and they liked to drink beer. EP and WS liked live music and liked to have a good time and we wanted to do something that they would have thought was great.

JB talked about the initial goals for the festival as well as concerns that it offer proper respect to the memory of their friends. As he explains,

JB: So when you are thinking about something to do to honor two of your late friends, it's really important that you don't put on an event that the parents don't approve of... Think about Mrs. S. or Mrs. P. coming to the first festival and being excited, but also very apprehensive and nervous and the same feelings for myself and William [co-founder]. We didn't want some knucklehead, to you know, get real drunk and start a fight and give a bad image to the event that we are trying honor our friends...

The core vision, an event that celebrates the lives of two people through music and fun, remains the guiding principle for this festival:

JB: So you know, could we have done a bake sale with no risk of offending their parents? – Sure, but, would they [deceased friends] have approved of the idea of us putting on a bake sale in their honor? - No. But even so there was always an emphasis to make it family friendly and, when the sun goes down, then we can have a party.

Organizing a music festival to create a fun experience for friends and family emerged as a common thread running through all of the festivals in this study. This was the case even though the organizing differed. For example, Chris, co-founder of the *Front Porch* festival, talked about how this festival actually began as a going away party in his honor:

C: The unofficial year, which was the first year, [it] was actually at my house now on Rye Cove and I was moving away. Sarah, my girlfriend at the time, was attending JMU and I was looking for a change, so I uh left to go live with her up there and uh, so everybody threw a party for me at the house that we had at the time. The Celthix [band] played and then, um David Vai, who is a local bluegrass guy around here played and umm, members of Poverty Level, a band that was around here at one time played, and so we had a good time.

Although the underlying motivation to organize a music-based event to celebrate someone is similar to that of other festivals, the *Front Porch* festival continued as a means of reuniting friends, and has since grown even more popular:

C: It was fun and it was, um, it was you know, was full of happiness and sadness and stuff about leaving but, uh I kinda woke up the next day and kinda had the idea of wanting to do it every year but didn't know the extent it was going to be. But like a reunion, as we called it, as a reunion to get back together and do it again... I've been involved for 6 years. We are going into our 7th year.

Both *Rooster Walk* and *Front Porch* festivals have since grown into full-fledged, legitimate businesses. Indeed, as the *Front Porch* festival is now going into its seventh year, Chris described how the event has grown through its ties to the broader community:

CP: ...but then we kind of moved on the next year and said, “Maybe we’ll start working with local charities. So we just did it at this place called the Old Dan River Park, if you are going towards Westfield in NC, which we got the use of for free...Then we got involved with the Food Bank...you [would] bring a bag with canned food and that was your entry. It was the second one and uh we had I think [the bands] *Celthix* and *Poverty Level* and *Materia Project*, which was a band from Roanoke um, play the first real festival.

They also decided to charge admission, albeit a small charge which could be covered by donating a can of food.

CP: Then we did it the second year and we started, I think we started, charging that year right, and we did a Friday and a Saturday and it was like \$5... It was cheap but if you brought a can of food we still kept the food drive part of it. It was 5 bucks if you didn't bring food, but if you did bring something, you got in for free and we did it Friday and Saturday night.

Both festivals illustrate how the Americana music festival often starts out with a modest idea and entrepreneurial spirit. To that end, participants talked about the intense amount of work that a festival requires, a factor which they think is often overlooked. As they talked about, while the idea of the festival may sound like a fun experience to outsiders, the festival organizers are tasked with long hours and months of planning that are often fraught with financial risk. For instance, JB recalled the tireless effort with minimal staff that characterized the early days of *Rooster Walk*,

JB: I would say that literally maybe 6-8 of us did most of the work. WB [co-founder] and I did the vast majority of the work leading up to it. Certainly, you have friends coming in for the weekend, that come in to help but the “on the ground stuff” is a little different. Of course, looking back on it, it is kind of wild that we even pulled it off. We were sending out fund raising letters to friends and family in our county area before we had the name for the festival.

Putting on a successful festival is not easy to do, and JB equates it to the task of planning a wedding, but on a grand scale:

JB: It is a lot more work than most music fans probably realize, it is certainly a lot more work than I realized, umm you know, going into the first one. You know, we just completed RW6, so as the festival has grown the amount of work has increased but like anything else the devil is in the details... the best analogy I can give and the one that I give when people ask me is that planning RW is kind of like planning a 4-day wedding with 4,000 of your closest friends with 40 bands. If you have ever planned one wedding you understand that all those details are what people spend a lot of time on. You know when the ceremony is and who the caterer is and all the other details. You spend 6 months on everything else so it is the same type of thing, a 4-day wedding with a lot more music and a lot more people.

Tireless effort and the notion of a few individuals doing many of the tasks at hand with very few resources is a picture synonymous with most entrepreneurial endeavors. With few finances and little to no help, Chris experienced a similar process while developing the *Front Porch* festival:

CP: Well the first couple of years, it was me and Martin [business partner]. It was really hard. He was here [near the festival location] and I wasn't, and we would come up [to the rural site] and I would stay at the old place for a week or two weeks in Tim Jefferson's pop up camper, which was horrible. [Laughs]. And you know even at that level you just don't know what kind of work is involved. Anybody can say, “We want to put a festival on,” but you just don't know what kind of work is involved until you actually do it.

Both *Rooster Walk* and *Front Porch* festivals are small-scale festivals in the seventh year of operating. Their founders aspire to “mindfully” expand their particular festival models. Expansion must be strategic so that the festival does not outgrow itself.

As JB explains:

JB: Whether growing the band budget or creating new departments within the festival that didn't exist year one, like paid security, for example, you know, the first *Rooster Walk*, the entire festival budget was \$13,000...I think it was 9 or 11 of the 13 bands played for free. Basically we had lot of people donating their time, donating their resources to make it happen, which is why the budget was so cheap.

In the first year of the festival, organizers accomplished a lot on a very small budget, which is another common factor among small businesses in general. With success comes growth, and JB explained the need for scaled resources to manage this growth:

JB: So that was year one with WB [co-founder] and I probably doing the vast majority of the work in the months leading up to it. And also in year one, no one got paid anything as far as staff. So yeah, it's grown quite a bit on the infrastructure side and that goes for just about every aspect of the festival. Year one, we borrowed a couple of easy ups [temporary pop up shelters] and now we own eight 10 x 20 white tents and we rent a whole bunch of stuff, but you know, as you are growing and you are going to have more people, you have to prepare to be able to accommodate the bigger crowd every year.

As a festival grows, more organizational requirements are needed to produce it, which, in turn, generates further needs. This evolution appears to lead to a formal organizing structure. For the smaller festivals like *Rooster Walk* and *Front Porch*, this means hiring people to help formalize the process, yet allowing the founders to maintain creative control associated with “being their own bosses.” Sarah, Chris' former girlfriend,

now wife, provided an explanation of how the organization has had to become more “business-like” in order to support the growth they have experienced.

S: I thought it was terrible, especially that first year. It was the worst idea in the world, I thought someone was going to get arrested, so the logistics of us saying, “Hey we are going to put on a festival,” and then without as much prep work as might have been needed, was stressful. It was fine, everything was pulled off, but it was just knowing that there was a lot that goes into and seeing the realm and thinking of all the little things that you wouldn't think about, like noise ordinances and alcohol, underage drinking, and how you have to handle those things. So the first year was really my experience with it and I was really on the outside looking in, just kind of helping out as needed... but really thought it was a terrible idea.

She described how imposing a structure on the process was what would make the festival sustainable and profitable:

S: After that was when I decided that if we were going to really continue to do it, we really needed to get some organization going and figure out how we were really going to make this a sustainable thing throughout the years... Yes, you can go out there and book a couple bands and have a couple of stages, but how are you going to pay for it, because at that time, it was coming out of our pockets.

Along with the need for more structure, growing a business necessitates the need for more capital, as it becomes important to finance bigger festivals that have more impact. The need to make enough to pay the costs of holding the festival became more important to these founders, particularly as they sought to impact the community through the festival:

S: Whatever we had in our bank accounts, that's how the festival got run and if we didn't have it, it wouldn't happen. So really getting to a point where we wouldn't go bankrupt trying to let people come listen to music for free, but we also wanted to somehow impact the community and work with organizations here in town.

Organizers of all of the festivals in this study have plans to produce their festivals again and to each time offer improved amenities, more music, as well as more vending, sponsors, etc., and in some instances, in even larger locations. It seems that festival organizers begin their plans for the next festival season almost immediately after the current festival ends, and many begin advertising, promoting, and selling tickets nine months or more in advance of the next season.

According to participants, what begins as an event to celebrate among friends can and often does grow into one that involves a full-scale business strategy and staff members. Expansion efforts varied across participants, and depended on the desired outcome. As will be discussed in the next theme, the way that a festival is organized largely depends on the goals of its organizers.

Festival Organization

As described in Chapter III, the festivals in this study range from small, to medium, to large-scale festivals, sharing similarities and differences in terms of both organization and mission. With the exception of the *Lockn'* festival, in general, each festival grew from small beginnings into annual small, medium or large-scale festivals. Consequently, as is discussed in this section, three sizes of Americana music festivals surfaced based on the type of organization employed by those in charge of putting them on: (a) *Small: The Local Kids, Grass Roots/Ground Up*, (b) *Mid-Level: The Middle Child*, (c) *Large: The Heavy Hitter, Palpable Presence*. Each will be discussed in turn.

Small: The Local Kids, Grass Roots/Ground Up

The five small festivals observed, *Shining Star*, *Bushels & Barrels*, *The Big What*, *Rooster Walk*, and *Front Porch*, each offer insight into what makes for a small festival, including community connections and aspirations of future growth. Each developed into full-scale businesses started by young (under 30) entrepreneurs through grass roots efforts. As business structures, these five small festivals can be further grouped into for-profits and non-profits. While the *Shining Star* and *The Big What* are privately held, for-profit ventures, the *Rooster Walk*, *Front Porch Festival*, and *Bushels and Barrels* are structured as non-profit businesses that are linked to particular community causes or charities.

Besides being for-profit festivals, the *Big What* and the *Shining Star* festivals exhibit a few notable traits that further differentiate them from the non-profits. Namely, the *Big What* was founded and organized by the band that headlined the festival, *Big Something*. The *Big What*, currently operating in its fourth year, is essentially the band's personal, multi-day festival where they play several times throughout the festival on various stages, both as a band and in collaboration with other bands. In contrast to the non-profit festivals' focus on community and local sponsors, the *Big What* is a party atmosphere focused first and foremost on the music.

The *Big What* festival is prominently band-driven and their offering of bands is mostly local/regional, with a few national acts. I observed it to be well organized with plenty of staff as well as volunteers. It has many of the same features common across the five small festivals, such as food and merchandise vendors. This festival also provides

showers, which is a rarity across all festivals observed. It features other unique elements, such as ‘live artists’ who were painting large canvases on site, as well as fire jugglers. The *Big What* had moved to a larger location from the previous year and was building the infrastructure to expand. Increased attendance from the previous year necessitated a larger venue in 2014. A description from the festival website reads,

Formerly located at *Possum Holler* – a beloved outdoor music venue in Prospect Hill, NC – The Big What? now takes place on a beautiful 300+ acre farm in Mebane, NC complete with 2 stages, outdoor showers, an 18 hole disc golf course, an art gallery, vendor village, woods camping, car camping, and lots of friendly people. (Big What, 2015).

In contrast to many of the festivals observed, the other for-profit small-scale festival, *Shining Star* festival, only lasts one day. The festival features multiple bands and was held in a rural location on a 30-acre farm. The festival, in its second year, has more of an “event” feel, yet it offers similar features seen at other smaller festivals, including food vendors and a beer garden. It is also well attended by the local community. The festival’s co-founder and farm owner, Jordan, has extensive experience with attending and organizing festivals. When asked about plans for expansion, he expressed a desire to keep it small and comfortable,

J: As far as expanding, you know, we toyed with the idea of expanding our thing at the Farm and really promote it and open it for up more events but we thought, why open yourself up to that? There is more potential for trouble with more people so we plan to keep it small and probably just have it once a year for friends and family.

Although they are both for-profit small festivals, these two festivals provide an interesting contrast. The *Big What* has moved to a larger location and is seeking to grow, though their sponsorship and community connections were not present. Conversely, the *Shining Star* festival intends to remain small and local, with no inclination to grow in the near future.

The three non-profit festivals observed, *Bushels and Barrels*, *Front Porch*, and *Rooster Walk*, are each focused on being Americana music festivals that support charitable causes. *Bushels and Barrels* is a one-day festival that features local artisans selling their goods, food vendors, multiple Americana bands and nearby wineries and breweries selling beer and wine. The non-profit event is sponsored by the RJ Reynolds homestead, the former home of the Reynolds tobacco family. The historic state-run site in Virginia presented the festival as a way to showcase local products, musicians and businesses within the community. Proceeds from the festival are used to support the homestead location as well as educational programs offered by the site.

Although the causes vary, all center on helping the local rural population, with proceeds going toward donations in the areas of education, arts, heritage, health, and food. When asked about how the charitable cause was selected, Katie, an active member of the *Front Porch* festival board, explained:

K: The community food bank as it stands now was just getting established. They [the community service] were moving away from these church-based food banks though there are still some church-based food pantries, but they were a new organization and they had just gotten a new location and I think there were people that were in that circle that we knew. I knew Chris had done some help setting up some shelving and we thought it was good way to make an impact in the local community.

As these smaller festivals began to evolve from their grass roots origins, the organizers realized the importance of involving the community, particularly as the size of the festivals increased. As such, the festivals require more community support from a number of sources, including sponsorships, funding, advertising, etc. Yet, this is not always an easy proposition for fledgling festivals. JB, the co-founder of *Rooster Walk* describes what it was like in the early days and how it has grown:

JB: Those were memorial donations you know, folks who were donating in memory of our friends or close friends of the family... as it's grown and year 1 went to year 2 to year 3. While it is also about remembering our friends, but it has also turned into something bigger than we imagined, as a legitimate music festival with bigger, national-touring bands.

Establishing legitimacy as a viable festival is important to attracting local support. For example, if the host community perceives the festival as a group of younger adults having a beer-soaked party in the woods, then it is unlikely that the festival will garner community support. JB goes on to explain:

JB: You couldn't mention it [*Rooster Walk*] as even a little sister of a more regional festival like FloydFest. It was still too small, but Years 5-6, those folks have seen it rise and become a legitimate small festival and now there are business owners that are interested in getting involved because it is a small growing festival. Where they maybe said "No thanks" in the past, or we just didn't approach them because they did not see us a legit fest.

Receiving positive press and accolades also helps small festivals gain more recognition and attract more sponsors. As the festivals experience success and grow in size within the region, they become more of a proven entity and area businesses take

notice. As JB explains, this happened to *Rooster Walk* when it was named the “number one small festival in the mid-Atlantic”:

JB: We got a lot of really good regional press for *Rooster Walk* 4 and 5, and getting some awards, that you know, um that were kind of feathers in the cap compared to amongst other fests our size... when we are starting to get positive press and folks are seeing that people are driving 5 hours to come to this event in Martinsville [VA], then it gets some of those community stakeholders to say, “Maybe this is legit and maybe this is something we should be involved in.” If it’s named the number one festival in the mid-Atlantic out of festivals in the southeast, then maybe if we support other art events, then maybe we should support *Rooster Walk*.

Acquiring legitimacy opens up opportunities for the festival to garner more resources, whether “in kind,” such as the use of free recreational vehicles for the weekend, or monetary donations that help expand the festival’s musical or service offerings. *Rooster Walk* grew such that Camping World, a national retailer of recreational vehicles and campers, recognized it as a festival that was expanding with a growing fan base.

JB: Like Camping World [a sponsor for year 6] for example, you know they are not going to support a festival and provide campers for a festival with 400 people. They have too many other opportunities to get broader exposure at other events.

This kind of sponsorship is necessary in order to expand a festival. That is, as a festival grows in size, its resource needs also grow, i.e. more sponsors are required to provide funding and advertising support.

As with the mid-scale and large-scale festivals attended, all of the small festivals advertise heavily through websites and social media, not only to promote the event itself, but also to request sponsorships and partner donations. Sponsorship donations serve as

capital investments to support the event, particularly paying for the bands. For the small festivals, this investment comes primarily from local companies that want to be affiliated with or participate in the festival. JB provides insight into this local sponsorship activity and the motivations behind it:

JB: They [local businesses] may sponsor because they sell something that appeals to the demographics of the people coming to *Rooster Walk*, but many sponsor more out of community benevolence where they feel like the fest is good for the community... or it brings in tourism dollars, or it brings back some of the kids that may have lived here before, young professionals that now live in Richmond and have a 9-5 or they live in Charlotte. So some of the businesses are not sponsoring to sell products, but because it is supporting the arts and it's supporting something they see as important to the arts fabric of the community.

It appears that one of the main limitations that constrain festival growth is physical location. While Jordan shared that his festival, *Shining Star*, will remain small, he talked about what it takes to grow a festival:

J: I think you are limited by the [physical] boundaries of your venue. Like *FloydFest* is very limited now. You know, they can only go to around 15,000 [patrons] and that's a stretch. And that's with parking everybody off-site. And they [*FloydFest*] dropped that this year to 13,000 because of the logistic problems and complaints [about] the previous year.

Certainly usable acreage can limit a festival's growth opportunities. I observed that for the smaller festivals that were increasing in attendance, the physical space requirements were serious constraints, especially as related to the number of patrons camping. In turn, space limits create other issues, such as general sanitation problems, parking, and logistics problems affecting entry to the festival site. Such inconveniences can create

negative experiences with the festival that may lower overall satisfaction and prevent repeat patronage.

In regards to growth, both the *Rooster Walk* and the *Big What* moved to larger festival sites within the past year, with the intent of growing into mid-level festivals in the near future. Upon the completion of the latest *Rooster Walk*, a local newspaper article in the host-community offers perspective on the move to a new location:

The Axton site [new location] has 151 acres, including about 80 acres or more of usable land...By comparison, Blue Mountain [the previous site] has about 25 acres which were usable...it will be larger than in the past with 55 more acres of usable land...It has raised close to \$300,000 in private funds so far for the first phase of the campaign...The initial funds have been used to install infrastructure at the new venue — roads, underground electric lines, upgraded transformers around poles to get power to the stages, water, with the festival founder calling them “things that had to be done to host the festival.” (Martinsville Bulletin, 2014).

As the small festivals in this study sought to move into the next phase of the business and made the decision to expand, they experienced a concomitant need to increase sponsorship support, community support, as well as the physical size of the festival location.

In many ways, this evolution is synonymous with that of the traditional small business, whereby the early stages are typically categorized by rapid and somewhat chaotic growth. Young entrepreneurs organized these festivals with limited personal resources to build their festivals from the ground up. Those festivals with the most growth potential, such as *Rooster Walk* and *Front Porch*, seem to exhibit more robust organization and stable business practices, positioning them to eventually become mid-level festivals.

Mid-Level: The Middle Child

The three mid-level festivals observed in this study were *Aiken*, *Shakori Hills Grassroots Festival*, and *FloydFest*. These mid-level festivals share many characteristics in common with the small festivals, such as early entrepreneurial underpinnings, charitable community connections, and sponsorship support. In terms of music offerings, the medium-sized festivals offer a broader selection of nationally known artists playing multiple stages. All three of these festivals have been operating for over 10 years. As will be discussed, some of the differences observed among them are the number and degree of sponsorships, the amount of volunteer help, and overall event organization.

For example, the *Aiken* festival is in its 11th year and is supported not only by several local businesses but also by a national brewing company, *New Belgium Brewing*. All of the proceeds of the festival go to benefit a local charity established in 1996 dedicated to helping individuals with disabilities improve quality of life through safe interaction with horses. While the cause is noble, I observed that this festival was really just a two-day party. An excerpt from my field notes describes the setting,

Relative to the other mid-level festivals, the *Aiken* festival, held in South Carolina, had the ambience of a liquor-fueled, redneck cocktail party with little control over the crowd. When arriving at the location, a volunteer told me, “Yeah just park wherever and pointed to an open area with a few campers.” The crowds seemed to be there mainly for the party as evidenced by many liquor bottles seen on multiple camp tables upon arriving the first day.

Furthermore, as compared to all of the other festivals observed, *Aiken* allows dogs. Dogs are strictly prohibited at the other festivals, and I observed:

It was a dog friendly fest, which was an anomaly for festivals, as they do not allow dogs typically. Across the festival, I saw 20-30 ‘fest-friendly’ dogs, some on leashes and others not. I saw no dog poop or dog fights so that was positive.

Lastly, *Aiken’s* attention to patrons and facilities are minimal. As described in my notes,

“Porta-potties” were non-existent... instead, festival goers relied on fixed physical bathrooms that were barely cleaned and in horrible shape by Sunday with nothing but remnants from the two drunk fest, no toilet paper, cans and bottles everywhere... I can’t get out of here soon enough.

In contrast, *FloydFest*, now moving into its 14th year, can be seen as a positive example of how the festival model is able to grow over time with the right mix of resources. Built on the same approach as small festivals like *Rooster Walk* and *Front Porch*, it has grown in many ways since its small beginnings in 2002. Attendance is now over 12,000 festivalgoers per day and the festival itself lasts 4 days. Supported by local and national sponsors, *FloydFest* is a festival that connects with the community on many levels, as it supports local vendors and partners with both local and national stakeholders such as Ferrum College (located 23 miles away), Kleen Kanteen (a California firm) and the National Council for the Arts.

Two aspects that distinguish *FloydFest* from the others are that it is organized as a for-profit event and that it serves as its own production company. This means organizers control many of the important details. For example, *FloydFest* has an extensive website and uses it to maintain a commitment to the patrons. This commitment can be seen in its mission, found on the website, which provides some insight into how organizers like to operate.

Our mission is to be the best music festival experience of our time. To sell a limited quantity of tickets to the highest quality event experience, bar none, celebrating music, art and life in an intimate, visually stunning environment; and to embody our values day-to-day within the organization, balancing relaxed style and a chill authenticity with detail orientation and high-quality work standard (FloydFest, 2014).

Organizers are comfortable being a mid-level festival that focuses on being a great experience, versus the need for continued expansion. As discussed earlier, *FloydFest* is constrained by physical location, yet growth does not appear to be an objective. Even festivalgoers noticed. In a field interview conducted on day four of the festival, Janet was asked to share her thoughts on her overall *FloydFest* experience. She responded,

J: You know, last year [2013] we came and it just seemed like it was just a little too crowded. I think they had sold a lot more tickets and it was just cramped and almost suffocating with the crowds at times. But I think the changes they made in limiting the tickets this year really helped. It was really nice and felt like there was more space and really just made it umm, how should I say it, hmmm, it really made it a more enjoyable intimate experience. It was roomier and I felt like I could relax and breathe and enjoy it.

Janet's experience clearly reflects the organization's overall mission, in that a better consumer experience is preferred over the desire to sell more tickets.

Like the smaller *Big What* festival, *Shakori Hills* was founded and organized by the band that headlined the festival, *Donna the Buffalo*. One of its members, Jeb Puryear, has family connections to the land used for the festival site, located in rural North Carolina. The band founded the festival over 13 years ago, where they usually play multiple times throughout the festival on various stages. Unlike *Big What*, *Shakori Hills* has a significant presence in the community. The festival supports many causes in the

local area, with significant funds going back into the community, and specifically for causes related to agriculture, education, and the arts. Of all the festivals included in this study, I observed the level of support and local community relationships were the deepest for this festival, particularly due to the fact that the host-band, *Donna the Buffalo*, has been touring the United States extensively and supporting charitable causes for over 20 years. The band/festival organizers have taken their success and support of loyal fans to various communities throughout the East Coast, including upstate New York where they began, as well as a festival in Florida. The band has extremely loyal fans known as *The Herd*, who are also loyal to the band's involvement with local communities.

At the *Shakori Hills* festival, there is an on-site indoor facility that the festival personnel operate year-round, where they host various smaller music events, along with education and community training workshops in music, art and agriculture. I observed that this education focus filters into the festival, whereby patrons can learn about planting a vegetable garden, utilizing herbal medicine, and creating landscape imagery. Similarly, *Shakori Hills* utilizes an extensive website as means to promote festival information, share community involvement projects, and to request sponsorship participation.

The three mid-level festivals exhibit similar overall qualities, particularly in terms of duration and support for charitable causes as well as ties with the local community. While all of them had been operating for over a decade, *FloydFest* and *Shakori Hills* exhibit the most stable structures in terms of overall organization, particularly in growth management, though none of the four plans to grow any larger. Each festival is primarily focused on adjusting to expansion issues within current physical limits rather than

moving to the next level to become larger festivals. The next section describes the characteristics of the large-scale festivals observed and explores how mid-level festivals may evolve along the growth continuum.

Large: The Heavy Hitter with Palpable Presence

The *Americana Music Festival (AMF)* and *Lockn'* are the two large festivals researched in this study. These two festivals are national festivals, lasting several days with a large number of attendees, peaking at over 25,000-30,000 per day. Both festivals have a prominent web-based presence, offering sponsorship opportunities, options to purchase tickets on-line and an array of information on existing sponsors, general festival guidelines, featured artists, and volunteer opportunities.

There are some distinct differences between the two large festivals as compared to small and mid-level festivals. For example, the *AMF*, in its 16th year, is organized by the Americana Music Association (AMA) and held in Nashville, TN. The festival is hosted within the city limits and no camping is available. The *AMF* is held in conjunction with the AMA conference that features Americana industry discussions on a variety of subjects, ranging from supporting social causes and integrating social media for promoting Americana bands, to providing insight on the heritage of Americana music, along with many other subjects related to Americana music, artists and industry. The format consists of panels and discussions in multiple hotel conference rooms during the day, and 145 music offerings across nine venues within the city at night.

In addition, AMF is highlighted by its annual awards show, hosted at the Ryman Theatre, which is a prominent historical landmark in the city. The awards show in 2014

featured lesser known regional artists as well as national music artists such as Jackson Brown, Robert Plant and Taj Mahal. Awards are presented for a variety of categories including “Lifetime Achievement” awards, “Best New Group” and “Best Americana Album,” among others. Finally, the vendor marketplace is limited. Small merchandise booths are present, most selling AMA branded apparel along with booths offering information on Americana events within states or music-related products such as sound equipment and instruments. Lastly, the festival is a for-profit venture with proceeds coming from association membership, sponsorships and festival ticket sales. In essence, the *AMF* was observed to be a weeklong gathering and repository for many aspects related to the Americana music genre industry.

Though deemed a festival, *AMF* offers opportunities for patrons to participate in other aspects of the industry beyond the music. A noted gap within the festival conference was the lack of discussion about the Americana music festival phenomena. However, one tangential conference session provided insights into the Americana consumer, a topic that will be discussed further in Chapter VI. Overall, the mission of the festival/conference is to raise the level of awareness of Americana music, promote the many artists involved in the genre as well as membership within the association. Indeed, recently the association has experienced significant growth, with a 20% increase in membership from 2013 to 2014.

Lockn’, in its second year of operation, is the largest festival observed, with 25,000 to 30,000 participants in attendance per day. This festival shares some things in common with the small and mid-level festivals that offer camping, vending, multi-level

ticket pricing, and the fact that a volunteer staff helps manage it. While the characteristics are similar, the operations are presented on a very large scale. For example, a ‘temporary city’ is constructed to offer amenities in support of the large numbers of festivalgoers. Much like the growing pains experienced by small and mid-sized festivals discussed earlier, Lockn’ experienced severe logistical issues in its first year. Festival operations reported that patrons waited up to 12 hours to enter the festival site, only to have to set up their campsites almost a mile from the stages.

Because the festival site is on nearly 5,000 acres, opportunities for redesigning the layout offered some relief in the second year. Patrons waited one to two hours to enter the site and camping options are available within a short walking distance to the stages. I observed the entry process when I arrived to the festival on the first day (see Figure 7). The line to enter the festival was very long, and far exceeded lines of all other festivals I observed. In addition to the long lines for entry, security presence was greater than at the other festivals. Each car was stopped and inspected for glassware, bottles, jars, etc. as these items are prohibited. Additionally, police officers with K-9s walked randomly from car to car sniffing for controlled substances.



Figure 7. Lines Waiting to Enter *Lockn'* Festival.

In addition to the higher level of security, this festival offers tiered levels of tickets, including general admission, VIP, and super VIP, each with its own set of amenities ranging in price from \$249 to over \$1,500. General admission offers the most basic amenities such as ‘first come first serve’ camping and shared portable restroom facilities. The benefits improve as the ticket costs increase, with offerings such as designated meals, preferred camping sites, shaded beer gardens, special seating, and backstage access.

Another distinction relative to all of the other festivals is that Lockn' is only in its 2nd year of operation. Founded by two promoters involved with the music industry for over 30 years, Dave Frey and Peter Shapiro, *Lockn'* is a for-profit festival. An on-line article about the festival describes David Frey as follows:

With more than 30 years of music business experience, Frey has been resolute in his choices, his expectations, and his belief in his ability to pull off a major annual festival in a field in Nelson County. Frey honed his chops under the tutelage of concert promoter legends like Ron Delsner in New York and Bill Graham in San Francisco, the mentor who he summons in spirit when logistics become challenging. (Graham died in a helicopter crash in 1991.) (c-ville.com, 2013).

While both Frey and Shapiro are considered industry veterans, they ascended the ranks within the music industry as promoters working for companies that produced smaller festivals promoting acts that became nationally known bands, such as *Blues Traveler* and *Phish*. Moreover, since 2010 Peter Shapiro has owned two unique, small-scale music club/bowling alley venues (600 seats) in Brooklyn, NY and Las Vegas, NV, along with two other music clubs, whereby he established many connections with Americana music agents and artists that have played at the clubs and *Lockn'* festivals (Del Signore, 2010).

Unlike the smaller and mid-size festivals, *Lockn'* is produced through a large number of resources, extensive management, and a lot of capital, which allowed it to become a 'big player' in Americana music festivals from the beginning. Offering many nationally known acts, such as Willie Nelson and The Allman Brothers, along with regional Americana artists such as Larry Keel and Sam Bush, the festival established itself as a large presence in its first year. Clearly, this is in contrast to the other festivals in this study. As one festivalgoer, Sam, described:

I: What have you seen here at *Lockn'* compared to other festivals?

S: This is a huge national level festival. The artists that are here are the top names and have been around for a long time...Here it is a little bit different (he points to neighboring campers). They are from California and Florida. People here are from huge cities. I mean they are from LA County!

Another festivalgoer, Jimmy, relates *Lockn'* to what he has seen at other festivals:

J: In my experience it is almost invariably at least a five-year deal, it's not an overnight thing, the closest thing that I have seen in being big overnight is *Lockn'* and that is because they are professional, they have a track record, a model guide or template and I think they do big huge festivals in Europe. I think it came down to they just had very deep pockets.

These "deep pockets" have clearly helped *Lockn'* connect with the surrounding area.

Jimmy goes on to talk about how the festival has impacted the host community in Nelson County, VA:

J: They ended up writing Nelson county a check for \$5M in taxes...They said they didn't care if they broke even the first year, but you have to think they make it up in merchandise and beer and food sales. I mean they sell out of VIP and Super VIP tickets. I mean, to me that is just insane.

A veteran festivalgoer, Jimmy went on to compare revenues generated by *Lockn'* to a mid-level festival:

J: These super VIPS are paying \$1,500 per ticket and they're paying another \$1,000 for VIP camping. It is mind-boggling the dough, but it is for the experience. I mean, look, to put it in perspective, *FloydFest* is on 100 acres, and *Lockn'* is on 5000 acres. It is a spread and it's a spread where they can pull it off logistically. It is on 5000, relatively flat acres in the mountains of VA. They did their homework. It is one of the most logistically ideal spots.

Both of the larger festivals observed have established a substantial presence, though done along very different trajectories and timelines. Both provide something unique, with *AMF* representing all aspects of Americana including music and business and *Lockn'* an immediately established, large-scale festival with the offerings of some of the small to mid-level ones, such as a diverse music acts, food and product vendors as well as several non-profit partners.

The festivals included in this study represent a continuum of organizations, ranging from the small local festival to the large national festival. Although differences clearly mark them, many similarities exist, particularly in terms of organizational structure, which points to the ways that each contributes to the combined Americana music festival as a phenomenon. Each festival is the culmination of months of planning and organization to create the unique feel and experience. The next section explores how organizers go about orchestrating the festival to actualize these efforts.

Festival Orchestration

The data reveal a multitude of activities that are necessary to 'set the stage' for a festival. Specifically, there are several steps essential to orchestrating a festival. Based on the data collected, five sub-themes emerged that shed light on how a festival is constructed: (a) *Cash is King*, (b) *Multi-Pronged Marketing*, (c) *Artistry in Motion*, (d) *A Place to Call Home*, and (e) *Committed Stewards*.

Cash is King

As with any business venture, acquiring funding to produce the festival is a necessary requirement. As described previously, this funding can come from many

sources, including both private and public. With a few exceptions, the festivals at all levels are supported by sponsors and donor partners that range from local colleges to nearby resort areas, food and beverage vendors, clothing and outdoor gear producers, as well non-profit organizations. Festival organizers will often request public and private donations and enlist sponsors to provide money in exchange for advertising at the festival. JB explains how the small festival grows through such donations and sponsorships:

JB: The first year the vast majority of our gross revenue came in the form of donations, 'cause we were sending out mailings basically to friends and family, basically explaining the idea for what we wanted to do and [saying], "We need your support to make it happen"... The kind of the neat thing from donors and business owners, folks that were supporting us year one through four, these folks were kind of supporting our vision of this. You know, the total attendance was not even there yet.

Sponsorship at the festivals range from 15 businesses and non-profit organizations at *Bushels and Barrels* to over 100 businesses and non-profit organizations at *Lockn'*. When I asked whether sponsorship impacts festivalgoer perceptions, JB shared his insight:

JB: I've talked to people that come to the festival that don't feel like they are being sold something. They feel like sponsors are constantly being thanked for making it happen. It's a fine line. If there were a lot of corporate backlash, it would be different. If we were, you know, if we were thanking huge Fortune 500 companies at every turn, but when you are thanking mom and pop dry cleaners, you don't run the risk of turning people off as much, especially those people that are local – you're not advertising Pepsi or Coke.

While this "grassroots" local approach is evident at the smaller festivals, it does not always hold true at some of the mid-sized and certainly large-sized festivals, many of

which utilize national sponsors. This difference suggests that as a festival grows in size, organizers engage in higher levels of sponsorship, which can jeopardize the authenticity of the festival in the eyes of the festivalgoer.

Beyond the sponsorships, festivals normally charge vendors for booth space but provide free admission to the festivals. Another major revenue source is ticket sales, which are usually pre-sold several months in advance of the festival and through a tiered-pricing structure. For example, festival tickets are often available at a discount during the months leading up to the festival and increase in price as the festival start-date gets nearer. The early discounted ticket prices are usually promoted heavily through the festival's website and other social media and in some cases even sell out. In addition to the discount pricing, premium tickets are usually offered that provide VIP access and other added amenities such as festival merchandise, preferred camping locations, early arrival, and special early music offerings.

Lastly, festival funding can be generated through the sale of festival-related merchandise as well as alcohol. Each level of festival, whether small, medium or large, includes merchandise booths that sell festival-specific merchandise, such as posters, hats and t-shirts with the festival logo. Alcohol sales were seen at each festival with the exception of the *Big What*. Alcohol for sale consisted of craft beers, wine, and at a few festivals, distilled spirits. These sales are offered primarily in a 'beer garden' format or special location that houses all of the distributors. In a field interview I conducted with a representative of a craft beer distributor, he explained that the kegs of beer are purchased by the festival organizers for a flat or wholesale rate and marked-up to

sell at a retail or market price to festival consumers. The festival staffs the area with volunteers, keeping the costs low, as volunteers are essentially free labor. Profits are made from the difference between the wholesale and retail cost.

Local businesses, in the case of small festivals, and national sponsors seen at medium and large festivals, all recognize that once a given festival reaches a high level of success, sponsorship is a good way to gain exposure but also to send the message that the business is part of the community. This holds true for both for profit and non-profit sponsors, which were observed at all three levels of festivals. Festival organizers rely on this as a revenue stream while the sponsors see it as a means to promote their products, services or causes.

Multi-Pronged Marketing

Along with the ticket sale process discussed above, strategies for festival marketing take a variety forms. Common practices include establishing a festival website and engaging in on-going social media promotional communications though *Twitter* and *Facebook* both before and after the festival. A wide variety of festival information is usually communicated, including festival dates, band line-ups, artists' music samples, site amenities, sponsorship information, on-line vendor applications, volunteer applications, etc. Moreover, social media sites are used as interactive forums for festivalgoers and organizers alike to share festival information, experiences, and offer both positive and negative feedback on a variety of subjects ranging from ticket prices and artist performances to traffic conditions.

Other forms of Americana music festival marketing include advertising via print ads in magazines related to outdoor lifestyles and tourism and travel such as *Blue Ridge Outdoors* and *Southern Living*. The small and mid-level festivals practice cross-promotion opportunities such as offering space to advertise each other's festivals within their own media guides that are available at each festival. I asked JB specifically to explain how he uses cross-festival collaboration to promote *Rooster Walk*,

I: So, I noticed that you do some cross promotion at other festivals like *Shakori*. What can you tell me about that?

JB: When we first started we reached out to a couple of other festivals and we were rebuffed and we were upset but found that is pretty common. So we have always had the attitude of helping promote others. We support the *Front Porch Fest* and the *Red Wing Roots* and this year we are just starting to see some support from *FloydFest*...they actually hired us this year to run their beer gardens and as part of the agreement we put *Rooster Walk* shirts on the volunteers.

JB's excerpt reveals some of the more stealth-like techniques used to promote the smaller festivals in particular. Other unconventional marketing techniques were observed at the festivals. For instance, organizers of upcoming festivals posted fliers on portable bathrooms (see Figure 8), while some passed out handbills advertising their upcoming festivals.



Figure 8. Upcoming Festival Fliers Posted on Portable Restrooms at *Shakori Hills* Festival.

Lastly, it was found that among the smaller festivals, as a means to highlight musical artists for upcoming festivals, festival organizers host pre-festival events within the community. These events are used to highlight the bands, provide an opportunity to sell tickets to the upcoming festival, and offer local business sponsoring the festival further promotion opportunities.

Marketing a festival is clearly a very important aspect of orchestrating a festival. Because a festival occurs once a year, much effort goes into promoting it year-round to maintain a constant connection with the consumer. Festivals have recognized this need

and created this multi-level approach to maintain relationships with patrons that attend the same festival each year.

Artistry in Motion

Alongside the advertising and promotion, the musical acts are undoubtedly a major component of the Americana music festival. Organizers must work with agents, managers, and directly with the bands to secure talent for the festival. As many bands must tour constantly to earn a living, the scheduling of bands is always a concern. The large festivals have established relationships with the artists and many bands ask to play larger festivals as an opportunity to gain broader exposure. As described earlier, bands also host some of the small-sized and mid-sized festivals, so talent availability is immediate. As the number of festivals in general continues to grow, the demand for the same bands also increases. While this helps bands, the cost to the festival organizers increases as it decreases their overall profits. For the smaller festival, this becomes a critical consideration for festival sustainability. JB explains the perspective he sees from the bands he deals with,

JB: I am a booking agent as well so I am speaking for myself. Dealing with a booking agent of a band is like dealing with a used car salesman. If they can sell that band for \$3,000 when they could sell normally for \$500 they are going to because that musician has bills to pay and rent to pay and family to support. All those gigs that you have played for free, you hope a gig comes along that pays.

According to JB, the risk is even higher for the organizer of the start-up festivals:

JB: It is easy to go out in year one and two and book a great band line-up. Book it and they will come. It doesn't mean that promoters will make money. You know,

Lockn', they booked about as great a lineup as possible with millions in band budgets and when they interviewed the organizer in regional media he said, "They lost an acceptable amount of money." They expected going in to lose money and that is what we were told going in.

In addition to the cost of the bands, other support crew such as sound engineers, lighting crews and security add to the overall cost and increase the organizer's risk. As JB describes,

JB: The band is getting paid regardless, the sound guy is getting paid regardless, and the security is getting paid regardless. The promoter, whether a non-profit or individual, is getting what's left over. So one reason it [competition] could thin out especially, it is easy in the first few years to lose a bunch of money especially on spending on bands.

In addition to the musical talent, other performing artists, such as fire jugglers, magicians and acrobats are often added as part of the festival's "sideshow" entertainment. These artists are included to provide other forms of performances between acts and sometimes in conjunction with the music artist. The music and other performing artists are a central part of the festival that helps create the overall experience. Additionally, the setting and location are important to the festival patrons, as they will be residing there for the duration of the festival.

A Place to Call Home

For festivalgoers, the festival site becomes a temporary home for upwards of several days. Efforts involved in establishing the festival location as a "temporary city" take weeks of work prior to the festival's opening day. Much of this work is done by the festival staff, along with volunteers that receive free admission to the festival in exchange

for their labor. In an online article describing the *Lockn'* festival's home away from home, David Frey, the organizer, explained the importance of location from both the organizer's and festivalgoer's perspective:

DF: You have to have a great place. You're basically giving people an excuse to go where they'd want to go anyway. But there really are three things: the actual place, the location and the timing. You want to be out in the middle of nowhere, but, at the same time, be nearby to everything. And I think this location qualifies in that respect also. It's out in the middle of nowhere, but it's two and a half hours from D.C. and an hour and a half from Richmond. Then there's Charlottesville, Roanoke and Lynchburg. (newsadvance.com, 2014).

As a festival volunteer for four days on the pre-fest site preparation team for the *Front Porch* festival, I experienced firsthand many of the efforts deployed for preparing the site for the festival. My duties included hauling, unrolling and installing hundreds of feet of temporary fencing used to delineate property boundaries, as well as special areas such as beer gardens and VIP sections (see Figure 9).

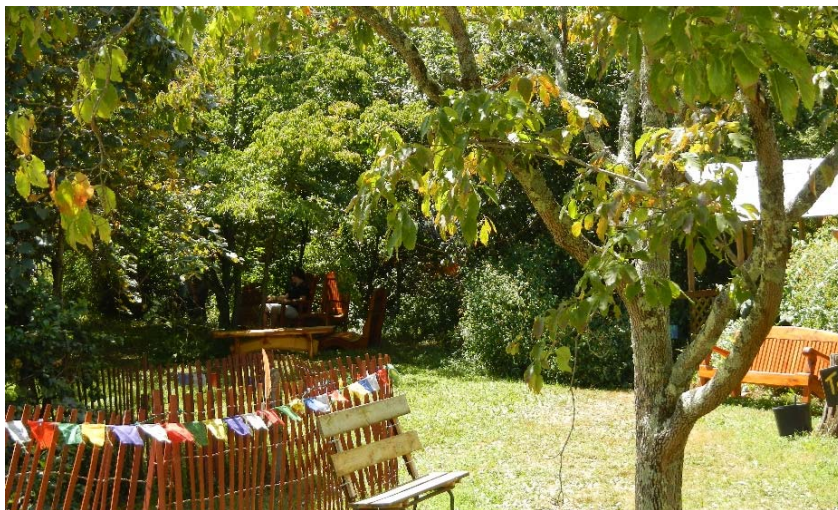


Figure 9. Temporary Fencing Installed for Beer Garden.

Other efforts included mowing several acres of hay on a large tractor to clear fields for tents and vendor spaces. I completed these tasks under a hot, muggy August sun with temperatures reaching into the 90s. The festival volunteer pre-prep work crew was organized to work several weekends in the months leading up to the festival. Other duties included trimming brush, and general menial tasks. However, I observed this “behind the scenes” work that goes into setting the overall festival landscape to be an important element of orchestration. Moreover, other services such as utilities, portable restrooms, and water stations are needed to prepare the site as a home away from home. Areas for medical personnel and security must also be established. All of this requires volunteers and the commitment of community services, which is discussed next.

Committed Stewards

Obligatory services at all festivals I observed include medical, security, and fire department officials, and they come typically from the local community. In other words, these people ensure that the festival site is safe and secure. While these services are critical and non-negotiable, unpaid volunteers primarily staff the rest of the festival. These volunteers take on a variety of roles, including parking attendants, alcohol servers, trash removal and band-hospitality. Festivals offer free admission for the volunteers, provided they work a certain number of hours. JB explains that it can be difficult to rely mostly on a volunteer workforce,

JB: Every year you are trying to plan around an event that is going to be bigger than last year, but we don't know how many we will have, so it's the balance of how many port-a-johns or how many front gate volunteers but you are constantly trying to manage the experience. This year, you know *Rooster Walk 6*, we had um I'd say maybe 25 paid staffers which means you are paid volunteer but you are on the clock 24 hours per day. And we had roughly 225 volunteers, each volunteer working at least two, 6-hour shifts... And as we use a lot of volunteers, managing the volunteers, that can be challenging, getting them in the right place or being the right fit for the area.

The volunteers are mostly untrained and coordinated by a festival staff member who directs their work efforts. Coordinating the volunteers can be particularly challenging as the festival size grows and volunteer numbers increase.

Along with those who are concerned with ensuring that the festival experience is fun and safe, most organizers recognize that their festivals go beyond the music and are a platform for activities to engage and interest the festivalgoers and make for a well-rounded overall experience. These activities include interactive games such as horseshoes, day hikes through the rural areas surrounding the festival, 5K trail runs, mountain bike trips in the local area, rafting in nearby rivers and many others. As will be discussed further in Chapter VI, some people attend a festival exclusively for the music offerings, while others pursue a variety of activities offered by festivals.

In summary, the many festivals observed, regardless of size, rely on coordinated activities and committed personnel in order to run smoothly and efficiently. This section provided details regarding the undertakings involved before the gates are opened and the patrons enter. The next section of this chapter explores the final outcome resulting from ideation, organization, and orchestration: the Festivalscape Collective.

Festivalscape Collective

Based on the data collected, it is clear that festival organizers drive the creation of the festival as an experience that, through ideation, organization, and orchestration, is designed for others to share and enjoy. As the previous sections illustrate, an Americana music festival is no small task, no matter the scale. A festival takes months to organize and prepare for and there are multiple stakeholders involved.

Through a collective effort, the experience of the festival is created, or what I term the “festivalscape collective.” The collective is comprised of the physical location as well as an atmosphere wherein the festivalgoers, artists and vendors interact to enjoy offerings that are both tangible and intangible. Based on the data, the festivalscape collective can be categorized by four facets: (a) the *festival playscape*, (b) *relational community space*, (c) *performance offerings*, and (d) *festival marketplace*. Each of these facets will be discussed in the following sections.

Festival Playscape

A “festivalscape” represents the general atmosphere experienced by tourists within the festival setting, usually in a man-made environment as part of a natural setting (Lee et al., 2008). All festivals in this study strive to create a fun, festive environment that marks a differentiated space unlike that of everyday life. This ‘festival playscape,’ or a space wherein consumers can enjoy themselves, is the motive behind much of what goes into planning a festival. The notion of seeking and escaping the mundane through leisure pursuits (Iso-Ahola, 1982), coupled with a place filled with adventure and one that is outside the ordinary, is common within the “festival playscape.” Participants described

these experiences as “getting away” from their jobs and enjoying an “alternative vacation.” For example, George, a festivalgoer describes the experience as follows,

G: People are looking for an experience, maybe more than say, like taking a vacation to a physical destination somewhere. People are willing to spend their money on a trip to a festival. We fall into that category. I have planned my vacation around certain festivals every year - I know I am gonna take off on Wednesday and come back to work on Monday and plan my vacation around the festival.

At the festivals observed, specific kinds of playscapes include beer gardens, areas for games such as horseshoes and beanbag toss, food and merchandise vendors, a camp store and areas for patrons to sit and relax. Typically playscapes are created in a variety of ways, such as pastoral rural settings surrounded by mountains, streams and rivers, handmade wooden furniture, eternal burning fire pits, drum circles, Ferris wheels etc. Festival organizers use their creativity in tandem with their resources to cultivate a unique atmosphere that is outside of the festivalgoer’s everyday experience. This distinctive temporal space is provided to keep festivalgoers interested in the festival’s activities over several days through constant stimulation, excitement, and fun. For example, a Ferris wheel and carnival games (see Figure 10) are elements of the festival playscape seen at the *Aiken* festival.



Figure 10. Festival Ferris Wheel and Carnival Game Create the Festival Playscape at the *Aiken* Festival.

Organizers seek to design playscapes as unique environments that offer something festivalgoers cannot get anywhere else. Participants often talked about the fact that the outdoor music setting is a key part the enjoyment. For example, as Joanie explained,

Joanie: I think outdoor venues are so different. Festivals are so different; in concerts there is only one performer. It is usually them and a couple of other bands, but here you are one of many performers and I think here it's such a relaxing environment for the performer.

Another participant, Sandy, also enjoys the fact that the festival playscape is set in the outdoors:

S: We like the festivals probably the most, in that it's outside. We like outside music and we don't care if it rains. ...What I like about the outdoor festivals is that everybody is happy, you know generally, you know. You don't see a lot of people get mad, you know, like an indoor concert where someone might get mad and you have people bumping into you...you know it's everybody having fun in general. We've never really had any really bad experiences.

As seen in Figure 11 below, the festival playscape at the *Aiken* festival includes a large area for vendors as well as a temporary “road” for walking and bike travel through the festival grounds.



Figure 11. Festival Playscape.

The natural environment also plays a critical role in the creation of the festival playscape. Rural settings with mountains and streams provide a natural backdrop for the festival and offer a peaceful setting for festivalgoers to escape within. However, nature

usually enters in, providing pleasant weather, or rain and wind. It can also go a long way toward creating a positive festival ambience (see Figure 12). The unexpectedness of something like a rainbow can enhance the overall experience and link a lasting memory with positive emotions.



Figure 12. A Rainbow Stretches over the Festival Grounds.

Creating a festival playscape that connects with festivalgoers is important to organizers. When asked about the positive aspects of hosting festivals, JB responded,

JB: Well, I would say one thing, a lot of feedback during the fest from folks and on social media after [the event], emails from folks who tell you that they had a really incredible positive experience.

I: What type of feedback have you heard?

JB: Well, I met a guy at *FloydFest* in line for coffee and he saw my *Rooster Walk* shirt. He said, “Have you ever been?” and I said. “Yes I’m the co-founder” and he goes, “Aw man, I just want to thank you ‘cause we just moved up from Florida and we are festival people and we went to the *Rooster Walk* for the first time and it just was such a great experience and one of the first festivals I have taken my son to and it was just a great.” So little stories like that. It’s really cool.

In a similar vein, a post-festival review in a local newspaper provides insights into the overall playscape created for the *Rooster Walk* festival:

Nice Spring weather. Check. Tucked away in the scenic foothills of Virginia. Check. Easily accessible. Check. Polite and accommodating staff and police. Check. Well laid out stages and concessions. Check. Lightning bugs and even the tail end of a meteor shower. Check. Festival goer friendly priced tickets. Check. Wide variety of talented performers. Check. The Infamous Stringdusters. Check. Anders Osborne. Check. Real live Dancing Bears (Humans in costume but we’ll take it). Check. Horns and Funk. Check. Bluegrass. Check. Proudly sponsored by an American manufacturer that didn’t sell out its town or country by going overseas to squeeze some extra profits. CHECK. (Martinsville Bulletin, 2014).

Indeed, elements within the playscape, such as the dancing bear remarked on in the newspaper article, encourage festivalgoers to interact and have fun (see Figure 13).



Figure 13. Dancing Bear Character Interacting with a Festivalgoer.

It is clear that organizers put a great deal of thought into creating a unique Americana music festival setting and recognize that festivalgoers seek to actively participate in the natural setting. As, David Frey, *Lockn'* organizer describes,

The landscape of Lockn' has a mystical quality to it, with sloping emerald green hills enclosed by the majestic, hazy Blue Ridge mountains. The site itself is spacious, beautiful, unbelievable. The estate was named for a massive oak that stands out on a ridge above the stage site and serves as the branding image for the property. The ambiance will come from the pastoral spirit of the land. We will incorporate it iconically. The Oak Ridge tree will be lit and made special. (c-ville.com, 2013).

A complex atmosphere, the playscape should offer a space for having fun yet within an orderly framework. As seen Figure 14, security personnel, there to ensure safety as well as order, can also be a part of the fun atmosphere important to the festival playscape.



Figure 14. Mounted Police Stop to Pose with Wooden ‘Love’ Art Structure.

Jimmy, a festival participant, in describing his positive experience within the festival setting, echoes this idyllic experience,

J: People that go to music festivals aren't going to stir up trouble to cause fights you know or be an asshole, everybody is going for the experience and having fun and getting away and it's really for the fun and pleasure and excitement.

At the festivals observed in this study, the playscape or temporary playground takes on the aspects of an adult theme park unlike no other. Characters of the festival, performers, lights, sounds, colors, and smells combine to create a hedonic location away from the normal day-to-day and permit people to relax and have fun together.

Relational Community Space

As part of the Festival Collective, all festivals offer gathering places. In this way, the festival setting offers a communal kind of quality where festivalgoers may gather together, be it friends, family or larger ‘tribes’ of fans. Such communal places take

different forms, among which are campgrounds, beer gardens and even art-filled quiet gathering points between stages, such as the one depicted in Figure 15.



Figure 15. Statue Filled Gathering Spot.

As part of the festive atmosphere, these spaces allow festivalgoers to congregate while on break from listening to the live music. There they can forge new bonds or strengthen existing ones. For example, one festival participant, Anna, points to how important this element is to festivals in general and describes the notion of communal space as such:

A: If nothing else, this festival is an important gathering time for the community to come together behind one thing that happens every year and like work toward it... and um yeah I think it really builds a lot of bridges between people in the community and just brings people together since the textiles and furniture manufacturing went away...

Others see the festival as a way to enjoy their time with others in a relaxed atmosphere.

According to Joanie, the festival atmosphere is truly relaxing:

J: Mainly it's just to spend time with Sam [boyfriend] and in a relaxed environment that fits him very well too... to get us out of our comfort zone... I mean I would say this isn't like the most comfortable but it's very relaxed... It's probably one of our most relaxing vacations. I mean we've been to the beach this year, we've been to other festivals, we go out to dinner and stuff, but that's almost not as relaxing as coming here.

Organizers seek to foster communal bonding among festivalgoers in a safe environment and one that is based on a mutual respect for the well-being of others. As Cecil, a festivalgoer, explains,

C: I think it's umm, as much about the community that sprouts up out of nowhere. I love the music and I love visiting with my friends, but then it seems like everybody here is super cool. Everybody here is, "Hey good morning, how you doing?" Like I said, nobody's trying to rip your shit off, you know. I never lock my van and I think that's the thing, being with people that are into the same thing that I am into is probably the biggest thing... I been coming here, nobody gets loud you know, everybody takes care of everybody else, no one tries to take advantage of people. I tell you what, yesterday I saw more kids than I have ever seen. I saw more young'uns running around here than I ever have.

That festivals offer this type of "bonding space" is an important part of the festivalscape collective that emerged from participant responses. The meanings that the participants ascribe to such spaces will be discussed further in Chapter VII.

Performance Offerings

The third component of the festivalscape collective is the music and performance offerings. Obviously, the performance offerings play a fundamental role, making the festival specifically an Americana music festival. Talent is usually drawn from local bands, regional bands, and national acts, as organizers program their festivals by hiring the most appealing band lineups. As discussed in Chapter I, Americana music is an

amalgamation of American roots music that crosses traditional genres. This cross-genre of music appeals to many festival participants, including Joanie:

J: I prefer festivals over concerts... I like blues, reggae and rock music. I like Ska and coastal music, some bluegrass, not a huge bluegrass fan. I'm not a big country music fan, I don't really listen to it. I like it when they blend genres together like they've had here, and I do love acoustic performances.

Likewise, Joanie really appreciates the music and the focus on the artists' talent:

J: Well I like how... how other artists will play with others and will incorporate other instruments. Like last night when we saw the acoustic set and they had all the brass instruments. I like to see the artists really engrossed in their art... I feel like the artists are showing their talent... yeah it's like, this is awesome music but are you really looking at that person as an artist this is their life and luckily they were able to make it their life...

Actually, many Americana performance artists are known and appreciated for being down to earth and even approachable. As one participant, Sandy, reveals,

S: I think that's the cool thing, one of the most cool things about festivals or Americana music period, is that generally you'll find that musicians who are top notch musicians...they are so humble and sweet and just have no attitude or egos and their egos don't get in the way of the music and I just, you know, I just admire that so much about them.

Lastly, it seems that the Americana festival musical offerings provide a level of quality that new and seasoned festivalgoers can appreciate. The performers strive for an authentic sound typically not heard on popular radio stations, and this is a major factor that is helping to fuel the growth of existing festivals and number of new festivals held each year. Fans of the music continue to grow as well. Indeed, most of the acts that I

observed are playing to standing-room only crowds of spirited fans. Importantly, the festival setting allows for bands to gain broad exposure across large geographic areas of the country and in front of a diverse array of festivalgoers.

Festival Marketplace

Based on the data collected, the festival marketplace is clearly essential to the overall festivalscape collective. An array of goods and services designed to feed, clothe and spoil festivalgoers in as many ways as possible, the marketplace also includes festival-related merchandise and camping necessities such as batteries, ice, and propane gas.

Typically the festival marketplace is comprised of rows of vendor booths, or multiple areas of vendor booths at the larger festivals. These marketplaces often resemble outdoor bazaars or flea markets where vendors are arranged under covered pop-up shelters or more elaborate tents. The merchandise is displayed much like it would be in an enclosed retail store, with clothes hanging on racks or folded on tables (see Figure 16). The proprietors, often only one or two staff, tend the shop and remain open as the music is playing, which can sometimes be from noon until the early morning hours. They remain open as long as festivalgoers are shopping, as most proprietors depend solely on sales for their livelihoods. In other words, if they are not open, they are not selling their products. Typically, vendors rent booths from the festival site. However, there are other forms of vending that will be discussed as part of a deeper, more detailed discussion of the festival marketplace provided in the next chapter, Chapter V.



Figure 16. Typical Vendor Booth in a Festival Marketplace.

Crafting the Americana music festival experience clearly involves a great deal of effort on the part of many people. Much like any small business start-up, festival organizers need resources and support. They also need goals, organizational structures and an overall mission to help ensure the success of their festivals. Regardless of festival size, the organizers of the Americana music festivals observed in this study approach festival ideation and organization as entrepreneurs and seek to create the ultimate festival experience for festivalgoers. It appears that the Americana music festival collective is designed to appeal to consumer interests beyond the music, offering a unique overall experience driven by the festival playscape. Alongside a diverse mixture of authentic Americana music offerings, and as will be discussed in Chapter V, a distinctive consumer marketplace, the festival provides a relational community space for building connections with other festivalgoers. Finally, although differences exist across the festivals studied, there is much that their organizers share in common. In particular, the desire to create a festivalscape collective that draws festivalgoers in and keeps them coming back.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the process involved in crafting the Americana music festival. I examined the steps of ideation, organization, and orchestration required to create the overall festivalscape collective. Based on observation data, interviews, and photographs, the key elements of festival planning and execution were discussed. In the next chapter, I examine the importance of the marketplace within the Americana music festival setting and experience.

CHAPTER V

INTERPRETING THE AMERICANA MUSIC FESTIVAL PART II: THE MARKETPLACE

As discussed in Chapter IV, the Americana music festival marketplace is an integral part of the overall festival experience and one that is facilitated by the festival organizers. At the festivals observed for this study, the marketplace typically offers an array of vendors, all selling various consumer goods such as clothing, jewelry, art and other items, along with food and beverage offerings. Vendors strive to be exclusive in promoting their wares. With the exception of the ‘festival themed’ products typically sold as part of the overall festival organization, most vendors are small businesses or individual entrepreneurs. However, as the popularity of Americana music festivals has grown, a few larger, corporate vendors have emerged to promote and sell their products in the marketplace setting alongside the small ones.

While this marketplace shares some qualities in common with conventional retail operations, such as accepting credit cards for payment transactions and using product display fixtures (e.g., hanging goods, table displays) as in traditional retail stores, the festival marketplace presents a unique offering for the consumer by providing direct access to the sellers of goods in a highly interactive environment. Much like how festival organizers create an overall “festivalscape collective,” many product vendors seek to construct experiential opportunities in which festival consumers can enjoy their goods. Moreover, given the nature of the marketplace, the products and the activities offered

therein are short-lived, lasting only as long as the festival. Held within a compressed time span, as will be discussed in more depth in the following sections, these marketplaces are different from the traditional ‘brick and mortar’ retailer and often create unique buyer-seller relationships around sales of festival products that have a limited availability.

This chapter presents an interpretation of the data pertaining to understanding the festival marketplace. Specifically, this chapter describes the marketplace setting and structure, including vendor arrangements, product offerings, vendor promotions, and merchandising. Furthermore, participants’ experiences with operating a business as mobile vendors in the Americana music festival setting will be explained. Ultimately, four dimensions emerged from the data that are used to structure an understanding of the Americana music festival marketplace: (1) *Bazaar Arrangements*, (2) *Colorfully Handcrafted Locally*, (3) *Spirited Outdoor Lifestyle*, and (4) *Pop Up and Go Retail*. As will be discussed, the marketplace is a complex, and yet unique aspect of the Americana music festival, as product vendors seek to create a festive and playful environment that caters to a particular consumer market.

Bazaar Arrangements

Data indicate that the vendor arrangements are designed carefully by organizers in order to establish the overall Americana music festival marketplace “vibe.” Vendor choice, product choice and promotion methods are all important components of this particular marketplace. Based on the data collected, two sub-themes surfaced that illustrate the typical marketplace arrangements observed at Americana music festivals: (a) *Choice Vendors*, and (b) *Interactive Design / Vendor Variety*.

Choice Vendors

At each of the festivals observed, vendor selection occurred through a series of steps. Vendors must first apply to be included in the festival marketplace. Festival organizers provide on-line applications asking vendors to describe products to be sold, pricing, and methods of promotion. Festival organizers then review the applications, typically using a jury process to select a variety of appropriate food and product choices. An excerpt from the *FloydFest* vending guidelines highlight the selection criteria:

All artists, retailers, non-profit organizations, concessionaires and specialty food vending are welcome to apply...spaces are limited and selection is made to create diversity and provide a successful marketplace for all... all applications are subject to a jury process... Each year we see an increase in both the quantity and quality of applications we receive... In the juried selection process the following is taken into consideration: uniqueness, creativity and quality of products, handmade artisan products, previously successful and cooperative booth space at FloydFest, local and community residence. (FloydFest Vending Guidelines, Floydfest.com, 2014).

Once selected, vendors pay a fee to participate. The size of the fee depends on the scale of the festival, ranging from \$200-\$400 for a small-scale festival, to over \$2,000 for a larger festival.

The notion of maintaining a balanced product mix and the idea of selecting the proper number of vendors is a challenge common to all of the festivals in this study.

Katie, vendor coordinator for one of the small-scale festivals, shared her insight on the importance of getting the “right” vendors in place.

K: Because we grew, a lot of vendors contacted me very early on when we started to announce our line-up; we had a huge influx [of vendors.] We had different tie-dye vendors this year. I don't like to do overlaps [of the same type vendors]. We have a set number of spots [for vendors].

In part, the selection is designed to meet a variety of consumer wants and needs, yet offering a selection "appropriate" to the vibe of the festival.

Recognizing that consumers may typically only plan to spend a certain amount of money on festival goods, organizers attempt to stay mindful of their consumers' spending limits. This consideration has bearing on the number of vendors accepted. As Katie explains,

K: There's a set number of consumer dollars to be spent and if you spread those across 15-20 vendors nobody [no vendor] is going home happy, if you spread it among eight, everybody goes home with a little bit in their pocket.

Festival organizers stressed the need to offer select vendors who sell products that are unique and not typically found in mainstream retailers. Kristin shared her insights on this aspect common across the festivals in this study.

K: I like to do a little bit of different things, *Touch the Earth* [Middle Eastern clothing, Instruments and Accessories vendor] is not something you see at other festivals and we like having them there.

Indeed, the idea of including vendors that are unique and different from a typical retailer and even other festivals resonated throughout the Americana marketplace setting. Sarah, a small-scale festival organizer offers similar views on the need to include exclusive vendors:

S: As you [the festival] kind of evolve throughout the years, your vendors probably have to evolve too. You have to provide ones that you know are going to be good for your demographic and what you are trying to do and not oversaturate the market... but then to also [allow festivalgoers the ability to] get some stuff they just can't get at Walmart.

Many examples of this kind of vendor were observed across all of the festivals in this study. One particular example, seen at *FloydFest*, is a custom dressmaker, depicted in Figure 17.



Figure 17. Custom Made Clothing Vendor Advertising 'Unique' Dresses at *FloydFest*.

This emphasis on being strategic about selecting unique vendors, and limiting the number of vendors to allow them to be more successful, emerged as an important aspect

for all of the festival organizers that I interviewed. As JB, the *Rooster Walk* organizer explained:

JB: We would rather have not quite enough vendors and to have the vendors really busy than a few more than we need and have none of the vendors do well. I think this year we have something like 20 vendors that weren't selling food...we had this year over 180 vendors apply.

Organizers want to create a partnership with the vendors that allow for a unique product offering, yet still provide an opportunity for the vendors to make a profit. The oversaturation effect of having too many vendors and spreading the opportunity to earn money too thin was not lost on the vendors. As JB explains:

JB: We could have accepted, you know 50 of them, and they would not have known that there were 49 other vendors there until they showed up and they would have had to pay in advance, and that could have been additional revenue stream. But, you know, if they show up and there are 50 other vendors there and they don't do well, they have a bad experience and don't want to come back.

Many organizers point to how choosing vendors with the right product can be a challenge. JB sees it as trial and error, but through experience has found what his consumers are generally looking for:

JB: The thing we found with the merchandise, and this has been like a trial and error and you live and learn. The thing that we found and where we are shifting is that folks really want to buy stuff that they see as limited edition or one-off, unique or limited supply. As an example, we had three t-shirts this year, one was a *Rooster Walk* logo shirt and the other was a fan contest logo shirt, the third option was these t-shirts [pauses]. I don't know the process, but it involves dripping wax on the shirts and you drip the wax to make the design. Then you dye it and a lot of times you dye it three or four times, it's dyed around the wax...they were made one at a time using this process.

JB points to the complexity of offering choices yet maintaining selectivity and uniqueness even with t-shirts. However, making the right choice can prove successful for the organizers and the vendor. This was definitely the case for the handcrafted festival t-shirts at *Rooster Walk*:

JB: The first shirt [traditional logo] cost \$15. The wax process shirts were \$30. We sold the \$30 shirts all in the first day. We also had a fan designed shirt contest where we voted on the best fan design and had these shirts printed...All were gone in two days and both were sold at a higher rate... our merchandise people really say it has a lot to do with what is limited and what is special. So next year, we are probably headed for more designs, but fewer of each.

Clearly, the products sold at Americana music festivals should be distinctive, as consumers prefer these custom items as well as having the option to choose from ‘custom made’ vendor styles. As will be discussed later in this chapter, even though the emphasis is on uniqueness, product assortments appeared to be similar across the festivals observed. The same can be said for the format in which these vendors display and promote their offerings.

Interactive Design/Vendor Variety

Physical layout of the marketplace is an important consideration for festival organizers, as they seek to create a shopping space that resembles a bazaar, yet one that is integrated within the music stage setting. Vendor “stores” are almost exclusively formed by sturdy tents that are open on the sides or a simple “pop up” shelter. Figure 18 illustrates the sturdy tent/shelter version of the “store” prevalent at all of the Americana music festivals observed in this study.



Figure 18. Sturdy Tent Selling Ladies Apparel at *Lockn'* Festival.

Tents range in size, usually averaging between 100 to 200 square feet of selling space. These structures are outfitted with garment racks and tables for displaying merchandise and include signage advertising the company name, products and logo. Each festival provides field space for the vendors in a designated area, often between stages, to allow festivalgoers to shop as they pass from one act to another. Tents are set up in what is termed “vendor row,” whereby vendors are placed side-by-side, forming a kind of avenue of stores (see Figure 19).



Figure 19. Vendor Row – A Typical Layout of Product Vendors at an Americana Music Festival.

Number and type of vendors appears to be commensurate with festival size. For example, vendors ranged from eight to ten at the smaller festivals to well over 500 at the largest festival. The atmosphere created by the layout was an interesting dynamic to observe, as festivalgoers were seen actively shopping, congregating with friends outside the booths, and conversing with shop owners. As with the idea of relational space discussed in the previous chapter, the shopping layouts are both formal, in the sense of being an organized retail space, yet informal, being situated as part of a music festival wherein consumers and vendors, as Americana music enthusiasts, can actively interact. One of the festivalgoers, Jimmy, explained why this interaction with the vendors is important:

J: You know the vending is part of the experience, I always check them out. I take time to always walk down and ask, “Where are you from?” There are certain vendors that I always make a point [to see]. There is a lady that I started buying shirts from at Live Oak years ago. She sells those tie-dye button down shirts and she is from Pennsylvania. She has her own festival up there. It is kind of a rolling community thing that you see, [the same] people.

Thus, the festival marketplace provides options for purchasing goods as it delivers a lively setting for festivalgoers to socialize within. At each festival, music from the stages can be heard throughout the marketplace, allowing festivalgoers to listen to live music while shopping and interacting with vendors as well as each other.

Excluding food and alcohol, vendor products that were observed across the festivals generally fall into one of six categories: (a) clothing, which includes hats and other accessories such as scarves and belts, (b) art, which includes prints and paintings, painted on-site or prior to the festival, (c) jewelry, (d) pottery and candles, (e) skin care products, and (f) miscellaneous, which consists of items such as musical instruments, hula-hoops and custom made flasks. All of these categories were seen in the marketplaces of the festivals observed, though the amount of inventory and breadth of goods varied by festival size. Typically, the businesses are either a sole proprietorship or a small group of business owners. The artists made up the majority of the single-owned businesses, such as the booth seen in Figure 20 at *FloydFest*. Many of the art offerings are distinctive, in that the artists are on-site, often creating ‘live art’ along with the live music.



Figure 20. Artist Studio/Booth Offering Original Paintings and Prints at *FloydFest*.

Alongside the vendors selling the different categories of unique and one-of-a kind products for sale, festivals offer their own products that consist mainly of hats and t-shirts displaying their logo in a variety of design options (see Figure 21). Festival volunteers usually staff these booths, selling merchandise throughout the festival. Typically, product availability is limited, much like other goods available in the marketplace, and in fact many sell out within the first day or two, particularly at the small festivals.



Figure 21. Vendor Booth Selling Festival Themed Merchandise at the *Lockn'* Festival.

In addition to the small businesses, entrepreneurs, and festival-managed booths, it seems that corporate vendors have recognized the Americana music festival as a means to promote and sell their products in a fun and interactive environment. Many such vendors are there to promote and display their goods rather than to sell them, though some offer random drawings for merchandise vouchers that can be redeemed on-line. Nationally known companies were present at the mid-level and large-scale festivals observed, including outdoor brands such as *Camper World* (campers), *Osprey* (backpacks), as well as *Vasque* and *Chaco* (footwear).

For example, *Chaco*, an outdoor sandal brand owned by a publicly-held corporation, toured and promoted their footwear in an interactive booth at eight Americana music festivals held across the U.S. in 2014. They operate an interactive booth where festivalgoers can ask questions about their products (see Figure 22).



Figure 22. *Chaco*'s Interactive Booth Promoting Outdoor Footwear.

During an interview with Kelley, the community manager for *Chaco* who is responsible for coordinating the booth activity for these festivals and other events, she provided the rationale behind their first foray into promoting their products at Americana music festivals.

Kelley: The *Chaco* tour last year was our first kind of experiential marketing attempt, if you will, on behalf of the brand. *Chaco* is kind of an unusual case study as a brand. We don't spend advertising or marketing dollars in traditional ways at all. Probably a rare day that you would ever see a *Chaco* ad in like *Outside Magazine* or *Backpacker* or something like that.

Instead, the company attempts to engage consumers with the *Chaco* brand through the booth where festivalgoers can see new products and get fitted for sandals. As part of the

experience, festivalgoers can use a self-serve photo booth to take self-portraits or pictures with their friends. As Kelley described, engagement is the key:

K: For the most part, we have really focused on engagement as our key strategy. So last year we had the first opportunity, because of the size of the brand had magnified so much, we were able to build a strategy around engaging consumers in person.

Although *Chaco* does not sell their product at the booth, consumers can view the range of product offerings and have an opportunity to understand more about the product. As a corporate level promotion, the overall brand is the focus. Kelley explained what this process means for the company.

K: Our complete booth and truck and trailer was really about encouraging engagement with the brand if you will, so we were a little bit different than say someone selling goods. Activation as an engagement strategy – engage with the brand intention with experiencing the product versus selling the product. It's more about the experience of engaging with *Chaco* and the *Chaco* brand values of travel, adventure and community – they engaged and shared experiences and it contributed to a great festival experience for the consumer.

As more national brands begin to recognize the Americana music festival as an avenue to reach consumers interested in the outdoor lifestyle, more companies may pursue this strategy to connect with consumers in new ways. When asked about the success of *Chaco*'s first tour, Kelley responded:

K: I think it was a wild success, um you know when we're comparing ourselves [internally to our other brands]. We have a really beautiful, really wonderful parent company, so we are part of Wolverine World Wide, which is 15 brands strong, and so an advantage of that is we are able to kind of look at tours that some of our sister brands have done and we were able to look at some of the numbers of some of our sister brands and kind of measure that and from a metrics

standpoint you know we would kind of consider the first tour to be successful just because we were in a position to compare it to tours by say *Sperry* and *Merrell*.

When asked about future tours for *Chaco*, Kelley responded with insight into creating brand experiences in general,

K: Well, I think I have more of statement about where I think that brand marketing is headed in general. And that kind of marketing and that kind of experiential marketing is far different than traditional marketing in every way possible you know. It is as far away from *Mad Men*, you know as far away from marketing and advertising as you can get. Consumers expect a very personal and very heartfelt experience.

Chaco and other outdoor brands use the Americana music festival marketplace to create new means of promoting their brands through interactive marketing that connects with consumers' experiences in the festival setting. Kelley shared her insights on the move to further alter their traditional marketing methods through narratives and experiential marketing,

K: We're seeing brands shift their strategies toward more and more digital engagement and storytelling strategies. "Brand as publisher" strategy, where it [marketing] is kind of coming down to quality of story [and the] ability to connect with the consumer. That same thing is very true in the field. At festivals, in person with retailers, so I think that this is a unique opportunity for the festival circuit and the festival environment to build and incorporate experiences for the brands into the festival experience.

A final form of non-traditional retail format was seen at the festivals: direct sales by individuals not in booths, including bands selling their products directly (as seen in Figure 23), or promoters passing out free products at the midsize and smaller festivals. This activity was observed to be almost a type of alternative marketplace, existing

beyond the formal vendor row locations. Roaming entrepreneurs were seen selling custom-made Bloody Mary drinks or offering craft beers from rolling coolers. T-shirt vendors were observed at the larger festivals selling custom made t-shirts directly from their backpacks.



Figure 23. Americana Band Selling their Merchandise from the Stage at *Shakori Hills* Festival.

In other instances, festival volunteers were seen handing out small promotional items with a band or festival logo, such as insulated can coolers or stickers.

A roving organizer, William, explained the benefit of this promotional technique as he walked through the crowd of a mid-size festival handing out free products:

W: We give out can huggies [neoprene can covers] as giveaway promos year round. We buy the ones that are neoprene, a little higher quality and they won't fall apart. We have been doing it so long now, you know, you see them everywhere.

At the large-scale festival, *Lockin'*, some food vendors were even observed setting up portable stoves, grilling hamburgers or grilled cheese sandwiches to sell directly to festival patrons usually before or after the music. Aside from being a promotional activity, many of these alternative vendors exhibited a type of 'guerilla entrepreneurship' making some quick money while staying mobile. Regardless of type of product, connecting with the festivalgoer as consumer through a focus on handmade goods is an integral component that I observed in each festival's marketplace.

Colorfully Handcrafted Locally

Based on the data collected, it is clear the Americana music festival marketplace is comprised of carefully-selected vendors that offer unique products merchandised to appeal to consumers in ways that allow them to experience the products while interacting with the vendors. Investigating the data further relative to the types of products offered, three sub-themes are examined in this section: (a) *Handmade Hues*, (b) *Local/Organic*, and (c) *The Mystical and Nostalgic*. Each speaks to the importance of handmade items sold, preferably by local artisans, that I witnessed at all of the festivals.

Handmade Hues

The majority of goods sold in the festival marketplace are handcrafted. Indeed, literally hundreds of vendors, spanning all of the festivals, publicized this in their advertising and promotion. Likewise, the festival guidebooks that provide details of vendor offerings and on-site photos of vendors reveal that there is a clear emphasis on promoting "handmade" products (see Figure 24).



Figure 24. Sign at Vendor Entrance Advertising Local Blue Ridge (US) Made Products.

Analysis of the data reveals that over 70 vendors associated with the festivals included in this study use some form or variation of the term ‘handmade’ when referring to their products. Some examples of this include: “Hand-painted watercolors,” “hand-worked leather, furs, clothing and accessories,” “sketches real time portraits with a quick hand,” “handmade organic body care, soaps,” “handmade wallets and bags,” “handmade candles and incense,” and “handmade [hula] hoops.”

The preponderance of the classification spanned all categories of product, including: “Hand cut and hammered jewelry,” “ wheel thrown and slab-built pottery,” “hand crafted chain saw sculptures,” “handmade, crocheted, knitted headwear,” and even, “handcrafted didgeridoos,” “hand dyed clothing” and “hand painted art on upbeat urban activewear.” It is evident that highlighting the artisan aspect is indeed a critical component of the festival marketplace (see Figure 25).



Figure 25. Handmade Leather Goods Vendor.

This emphasis on handmade products connects with the discussion of vendor selection in the previous section, as the intent is to offer unique, one-of-a-kind items representing the festival experience, indicating that something handmade helps to achieve this goal. In an interview with Bob, a maker of guitars constructed from old cigar boxes and salvaged wood, he discussed the business of making and selling handcrafted products:

B: Well, it may be helpful first to know that I have a day job, a desk job, I am a product manager for IBM, but as a kid I grew up in the woods, always running through the woods, making things for myself doing things for myself. But when I became this desk job person, it was not very fulfilling. I have always had woodworking as a hobby.

Bob, like many handmade artisans, found a passion for creating products by hand. His guitars are not only a way to create a product that ties into the festival, but they give Bob a chance to create something that festivalgoers can “experience” in the marketplace.

B: I’ve been a wood-worker for many years. I could always go into the shop for a few hours and build something and come out and say, “Look, here’s what I did today.” Something tangible, something you can touch and be happy with. So I had a friend that was a musician, singer-songwriter and he introduced me to the concept and there was a small on-line community of cigar box guitars and it happened coincidentally, that to supplement my income in the 80s I sold cigars. So I had a lot of cigar boxes. So I made a few and was just amazed that I could build something like that that makes music. It was magic really. So I just started making more and refining the process and worked on making a better product and it really just took off from there...And it is really gratifying to have a nice connection at the festival of people that could pick up one of my instruments and play it.

Clearly, the creative nature of the artists helps to drive a festival marketplace shaped by vibrant, unique, and colorfully-crafted items. Indeed, on a side note, from festivalgoers’ clothing, to banners, to the multitude of products sold, bright colors are pervasive within the festival marketplace (see Figure 26).



Figure 26. Vendor Booth Highlighting the Bright Colors Common throughout the Festivals.

An interesting example of the handmade products offered are those that are designed to be interactive, such as musical instruments and hula-hoops. Whether hula-hooping or strumming one of Bob's stringed instruments, patrons often use these items as a medium to interact in the festival environment, thus becoming part of the experience. In a field interview with Fern ("her festival name," she explained), who by day is a homemaker near Atlanta, she describes herself as an avid "hooper," a term she uses for the exercise of hula hooping. Indeed over the course of three-day festival, I often observed Fern wearing and/or spinning her hula-hoop. Moreover, hooping is an activity observed at each festival and even extended 'hooping sessions,' lasting for the duration of the day's music offerings, were commonly observed. During the downtime between

bands on the stage, Fern even teaches her hooping skills to willing festivalgoers (see Figure 27).



Figure 27. Fern the Hooper (left) Instructs a New Hooper on Proper Technique.

Hula-hoops were common at all festivals observed and used by people of all ages, but most were female. The hoops, however, are not the typical plastic kinds found at discount retailers. Instead, festival hoops are of handmade construction, usually of thick plastic tubing and then wrapped with colorful cloth (see Figure 28), while some are even outfitted with colorful lights for “nighttime hooping.”



Figure 28. A Decorative Handcrafted Hula-hoop Vendor Booth.

Local/Organic

Products promoted as locally made and/or organic were also observed to be quite prominent in the marketplaces. In particular, offering local-made products from the festival host community was frequently seen. In Figure 29, a vendor sells products associated with the area of Floyd, the host community of *FloydFest*. The vendor, *The Republic of Floyd*, sells t-shirts, hats and other products decorated with the Republic of Floyd logo.



Figure 29. Vendor Selling Local Products Associated with the Town Hosting the Festival.

Organic products were also observed to be extremely popular at many of the festivals. Clothing comprised of organic materials and skin care products are the most frequently seen products in this category. Skin care products are commonly described as “herbal body products,” “handmade organic body care, soaps,” and even “handcrafted to facilitate the ancient bond that links humans to herbs.” As seen in Figure 30, the play on *Grateful Dead - Grateful Threads* – reflects the key aspects of the festival atmosphere – including the bazaar-like open market space and colorful handmade products for sale.



Figure 30. Vendor Selling Sustainable Organic Clothing.

An example of a local organic clothing company is the *Green Label Organic* clothing company based in Floyd, VA. *Green Label Organic* produces t-shirts in the U.S. made from organic materials and sells them at their own retail store in Floyd, VA as well as at their festival booth (see Figure 31). Not only do they participate in local festivals, but they also supply small outdoor retail companies throughout the region. I observed that the company's booth was often quite busy, with festivalgoers browsing a variety of shirt designs all made from organic materials.



Figure 31. Organic Made in U.S.A. Cotton t-shirt Vendor.

The Mystical and Nostalgic

Beyond the local, organic and handmade characteristics of the products for sale at the festivals, there seems to be a general focus on linking these products to the spiritual. While not tied to any particular traditional religious doctrine, many of the vendors promote and sell products that are connected with the notion of spirituality, or otherworldliness, and link their products to the free-spirited festivalgoer ethos. For example, one of the vendors, *Back Porch Designs*, that attends many of the festivals over the course of the festival season, described the production of its custom-made items as a celebration of the human spirit:

Back Porch Designs are silkscreened images using water-based dye on natural fabric, clothing, or cotton rag paper. Each piece is a unique monoprint with many variations ranging from subtle to dramatic. With these images we celebrate the wonders of the universe and the pleasures and challenges of the human condition. (backporchdesigns.com, 2014)

Attributing a spiritual quality to products is a common theme among vendors of all types of product categories. From personal care products, such as hand soaps, to clothing and jewelry, this idea was commonly seen across festivals observed. A review of three festival guidebooks for 92 vendor listings included similar nomenclature in describing the festival wares and their spiritual connotations: “Represents energy”... “reflects energy and spirit of the music festival”... “journey into self-sufficiency”... “Turns living clay into functional pieces of beauty”... “expressions of the natural and supernatural world.” These “spiritual” product descriptions suggest that the marketplace helps promote a connection with the festivalgoer’s idea of the festival as a transformational experience, one in which the festivalgoer is “transformed” into a “new” person after experiencing the holistic Americana music festival experience. Festivalgoer interviews highlight this notion, which will be discussed further in Chapters VI and VII.

Beyond the spiritual nature associated with many goods, every festival I observed included apparel vendors that sold goods associated with the past, specifically products reminiscent of the 60s-hippy or counter-culture. Examples seen included an abundance of tie-dyed apparel offerings, along with various apparel associated with nostalgic beginnings of the rise in popularity of Americana music. In particular, objects associated with the popular band from this era, the *Grateful Dead*, were often seen worn by festivalgoers and musicians. The *Grateful Dead*’s sound is based on blending various

Americana roots music, such as American jazz, blues and country, to construct their own form of Americana music. The band has been part of the music genre and active within the festival scene for over 50 years, and is often linked with the free-spirited nature of many festivalgoers and the festival environment itself. The band appeared at some of the early, large-scale festivals such as *Monterey* and *Woodstock* in the late 60s and has continued to have a following among festivalgoers, which provides vendors the opportunity to continue to create *Grateful Dead* related goods to sell in the festival marketplace. Products like those in Figure 32 link these nostalgic aspects of the band and early festivals to the Americana music festival marketplace.



Figure 32. Nostalgic Tie-dye and *Grateful Dead* Tapestry Vendors.

Ultimately, it appears that the longevity and popularity of the *Grateful Dead* as a consistent thread throughout the Americana music festivals observed is an important aspect of the Americana music festival experience. Insights into and theoretical considerations of this on-going connection will be examined further in later chapters.

Spirited Outdoor Lifestyle

As discussed earlier in this chapter, companies such as *Chaco* and other outdoor lifestyle products and brands are discovering the Americana music festival as a channel for the sales and promotion of their products. The data collected for this study point to the idea that a growing number of vendors are offering a variety of goods and services related to connecting with the outdoor consumer (see Figure 33).



Figure 33. Vendor Booth Promoting Outdoor Related Adventures and Products.

One example seen at several of the festivals observed is *Blue Ridge Outdoors*. *Blue Ridge Outdoors* is a 20 year-old magazine based in the Blue Ridge mountain region of the Southeastern U.S. that provides information on outdoor events in the region, trends in outdoor gear, and outdoor adventure travel. They participate in festivals to promote their magazine and highlight partner vendor products, such as backpacks and other gear. Similar outdoor-related service providers are featured at the mid-size and larger festivals,

including mountain bike trip providers and guided river-raft tours. Nationally known among outdoor enthusiasts, other brands were prominent at the mid-size and larger festivals, including Osprey backpacks (see Figure 34) and *ENO* packable hammocks (see Figure 35).



Figure 34. Festival Vendor Booth Promoting *Osprey* Backpacks.



Figure 35. *ENO* Promoting ‘Packable’ Parachute Material Hammocks.

In 1974, young entrepreneur, Mike Pfotenhauer, in Santa Cruz, California, founded *Osprey*. The company has since grown from a small business focused on producing backpacks that cater to the serious outdoor hiker, to a nationally known brand used by a wide range of consumers and sold to major outdoor retailers such as REI. Likewise, *ENO* (Eagles Nest Outfitters) was started in Asheville, NC in 1999 by two brothers that focused on making packable hammocks from parachute material. Their business has grown exponentially, as Eno now sells its products in over 1500 specialty outdoor retail stores and on-line.

ENO’s participation at the festivals observed is not only through the more traditional booth format, but they also offer a lounge area complete with several hammocks. Consumers can lounge peacefully for as long as they want and the area is popular among festivalgoers of all ages. Beyond the lounge, *ENO* hammocks are also

frequently seen throughout the festival campsites. As an early entrant to the festival market, ENO has capitalized on creating exposure and sales for its product among outdoor enthusiasts, serious backpackers, and casual users that attend the growing number of Americana music festivals.

Interpretation of the data suggests a trend in outdoor brands participating in the popular phenomenon of the music festival, as doing so offers opportunities to create meaningful connections with their target consumers. With the marketplace focus on interaction, this context is suitable for both established brands as well as new brands intent on gaining exposure within a creative, non-traditional retail environment. The festival marketplace offers them access to a growing fan-base of consumers, particularly at the medium and large-size festivals.

Pop Up and Go Retail

Interpretation of the data points to another distinct feature that is shared by all the Americana music festival marketplaces in the study: Each one lasts only as long as the festival. The majority of the vendors are full-time vendors that work at a wide variety of festivals during a typical festival season. From April through October, they travel from festival to festival selling their wares from their ‘pop-up’ tent/shelters in these temporary mobile markets (see Figure 36). These modern-day ‘migrant’ sellers live a particular lifestyle and operate their businesses quite differently from a traditional five day, 40 hour work week. This section considers the mobile nature of the vendors and provides insight into what this means for the festival marketplace.



Figure 36. Bob's Mobile 'Pop up' Offering Handmade, Stringed Instruments.

Traveling from festival to festival is common. Depending on the goals of the business, the tours can last as long as the vendor wants. Determining which festivals to attend can be based on a number of factors. For example, *Chaco* selected their tour locations based on consumer insight and the predetermined consumer base concentration. Kelley, *Chaco* community manager, describes how *Chaco* fits with the festivals:

K: *Chaco*, the brand is 26 years old this year. We're relatively young as far as an outdoor industry brand goes and close in age to our outdoor friend at *Teva* and a little older than *Keen*. If you look at kind of the river based sandal industry, you know, adventure sandal industry if you will, we are one of the older of three [brands] and definitely kind of roots in the river industry and definitely designed and started by raft guides so that they wouldn't lose their sandals to the river. Modern *Chaco's* growth pattern definitely has its strongest consumer base in the Southeast. We sell more *Chacos* in Alabama than we do in all of Southeast Asia.

Chaco uses knowledge about its consumer to decide where its needs to be. When asked about the tour locations being concentrated in the southern and southwestern U.S., Kelley explained further,

K: There is a warmer climate and a longer outdoor sandal-selling season if you will. We see sandals sales in the South and Southeast throughout the year. Like, it doesn't slow down there like it would in the Pacific Northwest. So we see sales in the southern region even in January and February months.

In contrast, the smaller entrepreneurs are more constrained by resources. Other considerations are geography, or even festivals that attract a particular consumer base for the specific product offered. For example, Bob, the cigar box guitar maker, shared his travel schedule and constraints as a smaller vendor:

B: I try to keep it in within 100 miles. You need to have an ability to make lots of inventory in advance, since you may not be able to make while on the road. And, you need to make it as lightweight and compact as possible so you can move it around easily. That means items like custom-made guitars can be a real pain. I found myself at times hoping not to sell guitars, so I'd have some to show at the next fest.

Additionally, the vendor booth set-up and break down time can sometimes take a few days, which causes mobility and staffing challenges for the smaller vendors. I observed this first hand for the one food vendor I observed at multiple festivals, *The Sugar Shack*. Tom, the sole proprietor, requires at least one to two full days to set up and another one to two to disassemble. With a four-day festival, this requires nearly a week in one location, which may limit the number of festivals he can attend due to travel time.

Other challenges can arise from a lifestyle on the road, including camping in remote locations and extreme weather. Bob explained some survival techniques:

B: The rest of it is really camping know how. Be able to be away from your shower at home for long periods! Plan meals, plan clothing, be prepared for rain and mud, etc. If you are a good camper, if you enjoy it, you've got a big part of it taken care of already. And if you're smart, you find ways to take care of festivalgoers stuck in bad weather. Might make some sales that way! Some vendors just close up when it rains. I always leave a flap open and invite people in out of the rain for a brief respite. Spreads goodwill!

Sometimes the size of the festival deters vendors from participating, especially if they are not equipped to handle the growth aspect. For example, Bob shared this kind of sentiment as an artisan versus the resources of more corporate vendors:

B: As a vendor at *Shakori*, it is starting or it has gotten a little big and has a little more of that corporate vibe. Not sure I would like to continue to be a vendor there, but don't mind going just to have fun.

While challenges exist for many, the mobile vendor lifestyle has its benefits.

When asked about the positive aspects of vending, Bob shares his feelings on the overall “fun factor”:

B: [Laughs] Gee-what's not to like? Generally, the kinds of festivals I like anyway are a good mix of people in terms of, you know, socioeconomic backgrounds, in terms of ages, a little bit of everything you know. I like seeing a good mix of people bridging all these gaps, people that may not otherwise mix with people every day, you know, getting out to the festivals where everyone gets together and everyone is having a good time. And that's really the key to what makes a festival fun, is people walking around smiling. Smiling, singing, laughing, joking, having fun is really what it's all about.

In addition to the fun nature of the festivalgoers, the music oftentimes continues after the stages officially shut down for the night. After hours, festivalgoers who are top-notch musicians often play music within multiple campsites until the early hours of the morning. Bob explains this “happening” and what attracts him to continue the mobile lifestyle:

B: And I think I mentioned all the after-hours music that happens after the festival music has stopped. You know, with some festivals after the music is over everyone just goes back to their camp to sleep. But the cool festivals, after the music dies down on stage, the music just kind of blossoms up around all the campsites. And sometimes, the quality of musicians at the campsites is just as talented as what you may see on stage.

Importantly, a sense of community among the smaller vendors, and even collaboration with the non-competing corporate vendors, exists. Kelley referred to *Chaco*’s “buddies over at *ENO*” who collaborated to sponsor a two-company event at the end of the season, with *Chaco* and *ENO* hosting their own combined customer appreciation event at *ENO* headquarters in Asheville. Likewise, Bob expounded upon the communal vibe created among vendors:

B: Festie people are generally very fun/fun-loving and you meet a lot of the same folks at various festivals and form a bit of an extended family. Some of my best friends are ones I’ve vended next to in the past. And, there is something to be said for waking up at noon and your “store” is a sunny patch of grass with live music playing in the background!

Indeed, the festival vendor lifestyle provides a type of freedom as well as sense of adventure that many vendors are drawn to. They enjoy transporting goods from place to place across the countryside and selling from makeshift stores, hearing live music and

meeting relatively happy consumers in a perennially festive environment. In this regard, the Americana music festival marketplace is an idyllic setting for everyone, from vendors, to consumers, to organizers.

Summary

This chapter provided an in-depth look at the festival marketplace. Four distinct themes of *Bazaar Arrangements*, *Colorfully Handcrafted Locally*, *Spirited Outdoor-Lifestyle*, and *Pop Up and Go Retail* describe the nature of the Americana music festival marketplaces observed in this study. In the next chapter, a detailed interpretation of the Americana music festival consumer experience is provided.

CHAPTER VI

INTERPRETING THE AMERICANA MUSIC FESTIVAL PART III: EXPERIENCING THE FESTIVAL

As discussed in Chapter IV, organizers work tirelessly to craft the overall festival, providing a myriad of offerings for festivalgoers to experience, including music, camping sites, amenities and all other modern day festival accouterments. Chapter V explored the festival marketplace, illustrating how the Americana music festival functions as an integral festive marketplace characterized by many local vendors that seek to connect with the festival consumer by offering handcrafted goods that appeal to his or her lifestyle and interests. However, Americana music festivals attract an assortment of people who attend for a variety of reasons. This chapter explores what motivates people to attend and why they purchase what they do once there. Based on the analysis of the data, two themes emerged relative to the consumer experience: (1) *Who is the Festival Consumer?* and (2) *Festival Consumption Forms*. Each theme will be discussed within this chapter.

Who is the Festival Consumer?

Data related to the demographics and characteristics of the Americana music festivalgoer is somewhat scarce. At the Americana Music Conference that I attended, conference speaker, Jason Samuels, (Americana Music Conference seminar presentation, September 19, 2014) shared demographic and psychographic data from a survey completed at an Americana music festival in Tennessee. The survey was based on 1,500

respondents and is one of the first and most comprehensive survey studies on the Americana music festivalgoer to date. Based on the sample, 94% of the fans were Caucasian, 55% were male; 86% hold a college degree (either Associate, Bachelor or higher); 41% are aged 55-64; 35% earn over \$100,000; 76% attend greater than 5 music events per year; 88% attend music events with friends, and 66% are very likely to purchase merchandise consisting of mostly music and apparel. Similarly, the *FloydFest* Partnership Package (2012) lists its attendees' demographics as 54.7% female; 45.3% male; 82% aged 26-55; 80% with a college degree or post graduate; and 52.6% income \$50,000-\$150,000. Assessment of participant demographics collected for this dissertation largely confirmed these numbers, though some exceptions were observed. For instance, at the *Big What* festival, there was a noticeably younger crowd of 25-35 year olds. Likewise, the proportion of younger people in the 25-35 range appeared to be higher at the *Lockn'* festival than at others and this may have stemmed from the student discounted rates.

While the survey data from Samuels (Americana Music Conference seminar presentation, September 19, 2014) is helpful in understanding festival consumer demographics at a general level, the data collected for this dissertation allow for a deeper look at who the festivalgoer is. Based on observations, photos and interviews, a richer understanding of consumer characteristics, their motivations for attending the festivals, and their consumption experiences can be developed. Based on the data, basic motivations for attending ranged from those who are attendees for life, those who are attending for the party atmosphere, those attending for kinship of family and extended

family, to those that are hyper-loyal followers of certain musical artists playing at the particular festival. Thus, three sub-themes are used to help to identify the most common motivations found for attending an Americana music festival: (1) *Super Festers*, (2) *Here for the Party*, and (3) *Family Seekers*.

Super Festers

A number of participants could be considered festival fanatics, or as I term them, “Super Festers.” These individuals are similar to super sports fans that hold season tickets for their favorite teams and may even travel to “away” games to see their teams play. In contrast to participants who attend a yearly festival located in a nearby town, Super Festers are festival “lifers” that attend multiple festivals throughout the festival season and travel great lengths to do so.

One such participant, Jimmy, has traveled to multiple Americana music festivals throughout the U.S since the mid-1980s. He shared some of his experiences with traveling to early shows, like the *Telluride Bluegrass Festival* in Colorado and to North Carolina for *Merlefest*, both pioneers of organized festivals hosting bluegrass as well as Americana music artists. Jimmy estimated that since his early days of going to festivals, he attends at least seven to ten events per year throughout the country, including multiple festivals in Florida, Colorado, North Carolina, Virginia and many other states that now host Americana music festivals. Jimmy is married with two children and two stepchildren, all in their late 20s. He and his wife both value attending festivals and they plan much of their free time around them. Besides travelling to festivals, Jimmy also travels to attend concerts by bands and individual musicians throughout the country.

J: We are not exclusive ‘Festivarians’ [festival fanatics]. We go anywhere to see music. My wife took me to see Van Morrison last year in NY and the year before that we saw Neil Young two nights at the Garden.

I observed other Super Festers at several of the festivals included in my fieldwork. During a field interview, Shaggy shared that his long history of festival attendance started with following the *Grateful Dead*. When asked about how he got interested in festivals, he replied,

S: Well I saw the *Dead* in the 70s and was just ‘on the bus’ [a *Grateful Dead* fan term for being a follower of the Grateful Dead] and never got off. I’ve been going to shows [*Grateful Dead* concerts] and festivals ever since. I live near here [*Shakori*] but I travel all over.

In addition to being ‘on the bus’ Shaggy lives in a bus while at the festivals. More specifically, he lives in a 1970s VW bus that has been restored to its original condition. He makes his home in the bus and camps at festivals. In Figure 37, Shaggy shows off his tour shirt from one of the *Grateful Dead* concert tours he attended.



Figure 37. Shaggy, a Super Fester Wearing a *Grateful Dead* Tour T-shirt.

Similarly, I observed LK (Figure 38), another participant characterized as a Super Fester, at four of the festivals I attended. In his mid-50s, he has been to well over 300 festivals in his lifetime. As a business owner, he is not free to venture throughout the country as easily as some. An avid fan of Americana music, he travels within the Southeastern region to attend festivals, as well as to see the individual artists playing at venues throughout the region. LK also owns an extensive vinyl album collection of many of the artists. Beyond the music, LK shared why he began attending festivals, and why he continues:

LK: I go to probably at least eight or ten festivals per year and I just love this music. Growing up in New York in the 60s and 70s, we just got a chance to see so many of these artists [older artists still playing]. My wife and I were a part of the 'No Nukes' and 'Clean-up the Hudson [River]' up there in the late 70s and we would see so many of the artists supporting these good causes. We moved from there in the mid-80s but the music just stays with you.

He further explained that he enjoys the atmosphere of the Americana music festival, saying, "I think it's just the community, the sense of community that springs up at so many of these festivals."



Figure 38. LK Enjoying the *FloydFest* Atmosphere.

Based on my observations, Super Festers are motivated by the music, yet also seem to enjoy all of what the festival experience has to offer. For example, Sandy describes the enjoyment she gets from discovering new festivals,

S: We're not real die hard followers of particular [music] groups, like *Donna the Buffalo* fans, because we like to check out what we can find that is not [the bands] that everybody talks about – so that's what we search out. We like what the small festivals can sometimes offer...we found this little festival *Brews and Barbeque* in St. Augustine [FL] and we saw Dave Mason [famous English musician from the band *Traffic*] for five dollars. It was great. We search out [festivals] wherever we go.

These “super fans” are inspired by the opportunities to purchase music and festival-related goods, travel from event to event to see the country, socialize with old friends and family, listen to their favorite artists and learn about new artists. Many enjoy it so much that as Sandy even joked, “We're broke because we go to so many festivals [laughs].” Though she was kidding, Sandy's comment indicates the extent to which attending festivals is an integral part of their lives, to the point where these consumers spend much of their free time and money on the festival lifestyle.

Similar kinds of groups were observed at the festivals, but these were usually related to specific bands. Much like the *Grateful Dead* followers known as “Deadheads,” similarly devoted festivalgoers were present at the Americana music festivals, including “Spread Heads,” (*Widespread Panic*), “The Herd,” (*Donna the Buffalo*), “Warrior People,” (*Nahko and Medicine for the People*) and the “Wharf Rats.” The Wharf Rats are followers of the *Grateful Dead* but practice a sober lifestyle and promote festival attendance through sober practices. For example, the Wharf Rats hold daily Alcoholics Anonymous meetings during some of the festivals and offer sponsorships to support those attendees who may need help with maintaining sobriety.

Here for the Party

Among festivalgoers that participated in this study, one segment clearly attended for the social atmosphere. These festivalgoers were usually seen in larger groups and drinking heavily. Many would stay up very late and then sleep until late morning, sometimes falling down to sleep wherever they were the night before. For example, Figure 39, a photo taken at 6:30 a.m. of a festivalgoer asleep on top of the trailer where he had landed the night before, highlights the extent of the partygoer excess.



Figure 39. Early Morning *Big What* Festivalgoer Sleeping on Top of a Trailer.

While these festivalgoers seemed somewhat motivated by the music, the primary driver was the experience of socializing, and particularly drinking. Festivalgoers in this group did not seem to care as much about the music as they did the “scene.” Often observed to be talking through the music acts and “pounding beers,” those in the “Here for the Party” group seem focused on enjoying the party atmosphere offered by festivals. Though not completely generational, this group appeared to be comprised of younger adults, aged 21-35, and was most noticeable at the *Big What*, *Aiken*, and *Lockn’* festivals. Figure 40 shows “Scuba Man” with a beer in-hand enjoying the festival.



Figure 40. Festivalgoer Drinking in his Scuba Suit at the *Aiken* Festival.

In some ways, this group of festivalgoers comes across as less authentic in their appreciation of the music than the other two groups. For instance, at *Lockn'* I was assigned a camping location next to a group of eight college students from a small school in the Southeast. After parking and beginning to set-up camp, I was greeted with several loud "How's it going bro?" It is near 12 p.m. and all of the students have beers in their hands and empty beer cans litter the ground. The group was friendly and I immediately felt old. I explained to them my researcher role at UNC-G and was eyed by the group suspiciously. While we became neighbors by default and became friendly, we clearly had different agendas.

Throughout the four-day festival, their party continued with late night drinking and loud shouting and singing into the early morning hours. I would wake up at 6 a.m. each day and most of the group had only been asleep for an hour or so, sleeping curled up on the ground, either in their sleeping bags or wrapped in tarps or blankets (Figure 41).



Figure 41. Sleeping on the Ground at *Lockn'*.

As an observer, I felt like an older festivalgoer, who, camping beside a wild bunch of young partiers saw their motives as less than authentic and more in line with a bachelor party than an Americana music festival. As I wrote in my fieldnotes,

There were a lot of drunk amateurs with no appreciation for the music and more self-absorbed in seeing how wasted they can get with little regard for the music scene, conservation, or each other. There is trash all over the place, and it seems to be more about the party than anything else.

Indeed, as my neighbors awakened, they would immediately light cigarettes and begin rehashing the previous night's escapades, with the conversation typically involving

reliving how “fu*ked-up” they got the night before and how “fu*ked-up” they planned to get that day.

Thinking perhaps that my observation was a bit age-biased, I asked other festivalgoers about those in the “Here For the Party” segment. When asked to describe the Lockn’ festival, Joanie replies,

J: One word I would use to describe this festival is ‘intoxicated.’ [laughs]

I: You are or others?

J: [laughs] Others, I have not been. I would say the freak factor for this festival has been up there. I was trying to find a word for it like ‘eclectic’ but no, that sounds positive, too positive from what I am thinking. *Floyd* [fest] is organic to the area and I feel like the people there are conducive to the environment and it’s like roots there. Here it feels like they [other festivalgoers] are posing and that sounds horrible but it’s like do you [partying festivalgoers] really like it or do you just want to like it? Are you really in it or do you just think you should be?

For Joanie, the “Here for the Party” festivalgoer seemed intent on partying at all costs.

Joanie continues to share,

J: I’ve seen much more of [that] here than any festival I’ve ever been to. Much more open display everywhere. Much more than any festival, or rave or club or punk band I’ve ever seen. I kind of feel some of them disrespect the artists. Like they are not taking it seriously...it’s, just it’s just more, more, more, more, and I ‘don’t know what it is they are connecting...do they really connect to what it is they are listening to and seeing and feeling. Especially like the environment, the moon, the stars, the sky, the air, the things all around you, plus the people. I see a very much a lack of consideration for each other...here you are very much on your own it’s not my problem, “Oh you fell I’m sorry.” Call the EMS people it’s not my problem they are not here with me. I don’t know if they really appreciate the art of it as much. I really feel like they’re drunk and disgusting and like ugh we are just here. It’s like a direct insult to me because I appreciate the artists.

When referring to the raucous party crowd, Jimmy described it as, “Everybody is swinging for the fences on the first night.” Furthermore, Sandy, who is an avid festivalgoer, shared her observations and concerns about this group of festivalgoers in general:

S: I hate to say as the younger people coming in to age now. I think we are going to see festivals go downhill as far as that goes. Kids don’t care anymore and they haven’t been taught to care. They throw their trash everywhere and they don’t seem to care. They just drop their cups down and never think of going to a trashcan. That’s only thing that diehards like us may see [these issue] we may be seeing some changes there.

Sandy goes on to reflect on her comments and offers some insight that may suggest this behavior is inherent to youth. She continues,

S: You know, thinking [about this group], I am sitting here cracking up. I am sitting here thinking about the kids that go to music festivals today not about the music. I can’t say that back then, when I was younger, that it was about the music.

While the behavior, as judged by others, may be generational, at some festivals there did seem to be a distinct segment of festivalgoers that I observed that were clearly intent on enjoying themselves solely by imbibing large quantities of alcohol. This motivation was a sharp contrast to that of the “Super Fester,” as well as the next group, the “Family Seekers.”

Family Seekers

Familial bonds motivated several participants to attend Americana music festivals. Many use the festival as a means to reunite with family or extended family. Several spoke of sharing “meaningful” time with their friends and family members as a

key motivation for attending festivals. In fact, many of these participants treated festivals as an annual vacation, taking days off to enjoy the festival on a social basis first, with music being a close second. For example, two festivalgoers, seen in Figure 42, are childhood friends. Both are now married, one with children and each living in different states. They shared with me that they consider themselves “sisters” and meet each other at one or two festivals per year to reconnect, have fun, and listen to music. Likewise, a father and son attending *Lockn’* are shown in Figure 43. As they explained, they travel to a few festivals each year to camp with other friends and family and to enjoy the time together while listening to music.



Figure 42. Festival “Sisters” at the *Big What* Festival.

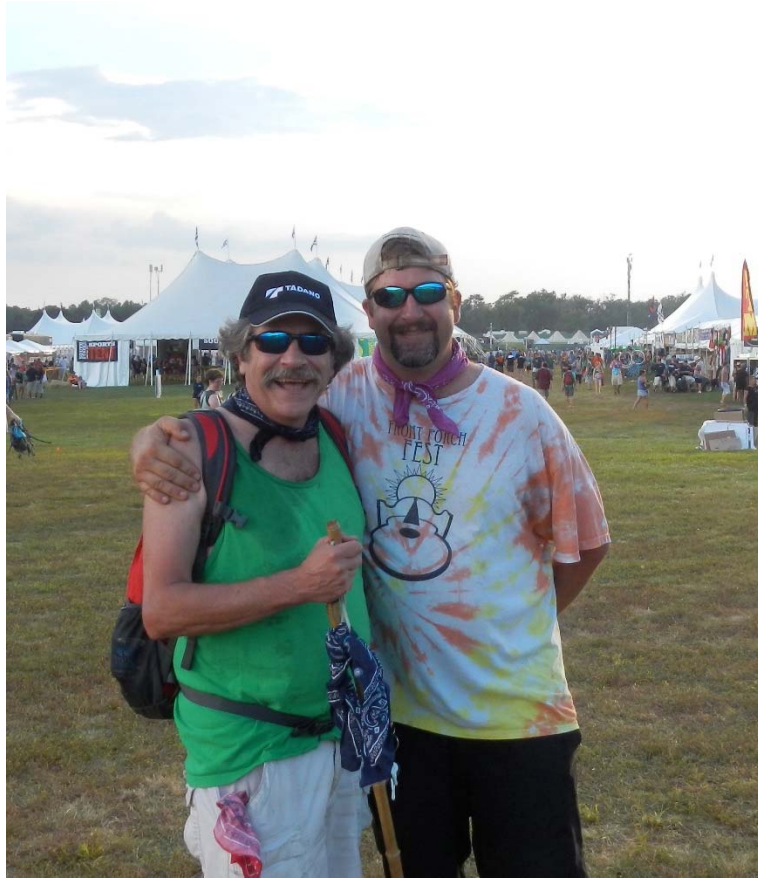


Figure 43. Father and Son at the *Lockn'* Festival.

Similarly, one of the participants, Stafford, considers a festival an annual opportunity to meet up with friends. He explains,

S: Well even though I might not be part of the main group, I like being part of a place where I can meet up with people, friends, where that is the only time I do see them is at a music festival because either geographically we live too far away or we're caught up in our own lives.

The idea of meeting old friends is appealing to these festivalgoers, as is the idea of making “festival” friends. In other words, friendships are formed at festivals with

“festival friends” or acquaintances that may only see each other when attending an annual festival. Stafford continues,

S: Even though I am not networking for any end means, I have really met some nice people that I want to continue seeing. I have expanded my network of friends and they are just festival friends for the most part, but it is good to see them twice a year or three times a year and it's good to see them. You know, it's people that might not know my name but he's going to remember my face next time and we will sit and drink and talk trash for the next three hours and watch the bands.

Indeed, the notion of establishing a social network of friends at festivals is important to this segment of festivalgoers. For example, when asked about his motives for attending the *Rooster Walk*, Cecil explains:

C: Great experience so far. This is the second year I get to camp beside Tracy and his wife and it's really good. I had a suite mate from Elon that is from this area and I didn't realize was going to come out here and I ran into to him and you know, just getting up with the same people year after year [is great]. I try to do four fests a year. My brother, 4 years older, got me into it. He took me to *Merlefest*. People that are into the same thing I am into, I think, that is probably the biggest thing. It validates me. I think all the time, you know my wife thinks I am a little crazy, but damn there's 4000 people out here that think just like I do. Who's got the problem? [Laughs]

Cecil went on to describe that he lives close by and enjoys getting his teenage son involved with the festival as a way to spend time with him:

C: This is the perfect size [festival]. I am afraid if it gets too big that will be the first thing that goes is the sense of community. I always come to this festival. It's close to the house, my old lady lets me come; I bring my son out and try to get him involved. My son, he's 13 but he couldn't make this one. You know, I was really bummed out. You get to enjoy that father/son time and all that.

When asked to describe the festival in one word, Cecil states. “Consistent.” He then explained further about how it is like a family reunion for him:

C: It’s consistently good, you know, like I said, 20 years from now I’ll be camped right here and I’ll have buddies in VIP and this is like a family reunion almost to come back. And the more I do it, the more I see people I have met before, and be like, “Hey how you doing” and that’s the thing I like most about it.

Other festivalgoers travel great distances to stay connected with friends. Anna has travelled to Virginia from Montana, and explains,

A: I’ve attended this festival for the last three years. It is one that I wish I could come to every year. I have a lot of friends that are intimately connected with the organizers and I know a lot of people that put it on and a lot of people that come. So yeah, it’s kind of like, it’s my community. I think the most important thing is really just supporting what they are doing and [I] just think being a part of that is important...I’ve travelled here from Montana, which is a really long way but my hometown is just an hour away. I have never gone to a festival by myself. I always go with groups of friends and it’s usually with the same group of friends and we usually have a circuit every year that are kind of the same festivals that are in our area.

For another participant, Burro, the chance to get together with friends and support the festival is what prompts him to attend every year:

B: Well-being from this area and going to college at Virginia Tech and now working in Danville, I have been trying to get involved with some of the planning organizations. This year, I probably brought as much stuff to this festival as I ever have. We knew we were going to have a big group so we tried to make it [campsite] as accommodating and comfortable as possible. I think we have done a really good job in keeping everybody happy so far.

Alongside relaxation, some festivalgoers even saw the opportunity to camp as a kind of adventure in “roughing it.” Joanie describes,

J: I see at other festivals they have activities like yoga and art or meditation but we haven't done any here. I think we mostly just come for the music and being outside. It's just a real kind of chill environment and I like cooking on the little stove. [When camping] I like trying to be innovative and as resourceful as possible. Because we are so overindulged, it's amazing that we kind of bathed, and made coffee and cooked on one gallon of water this morning. [Smiling] That's pretty cool when I think about home and showering and our three kids at it takes way more than a gallon of water. And I don't think I stink right now at least. [Laughs]

Communal gatherings via camping were a common site with this segment of festivalgoer. Figure 44 includes a group of friends gathered at a campsite. Two of the three are lifelong friends that grew up together. In Figure 45, an uncle and nephew are enjoying the live music together. Indeed, ties of family and friendship bring these festivalgoers together and seem to be an important part of what helps create the sense of community for this group.



Figure 44. Childhood Friends Gathered at their Campsite.



Figure 45. Uncle and Nephew Enjoying the *Rooster Walk* Festival.

Clearly, each of the three groups of festivalgoers discussed here is motivated to attend for different reasons. Based on the data, the distinctions among the three groups suggest that each is drawn to primary and secondary aspects of festivals. For example, the “Super Fester” is primarily focused on the music and often travels great lengths to seek out multiple festivals throughout the year. Super Festers often have attended many festivals in the past and even attend concerts held by the individual performers outside of the festival space. Secondary to the music, this group also enjoys the overall festival experience.

Individuals in the “Here for the Party” group seem to be primarily focused on the social or party atmosphere of the festival first, and the music second. While mostly a younger group, this is not always the main factor. Many of these consumers have less festival experience overall and may be new to the festival phenomenon. Lastly, “Family Seekers” festivalgoers are drawn by the social experiences offered by festivals to gather with friends and extended family as well as make new “festival friends.” To this end, the festival is almost a homecoming kind of event, serving as the primary motive, while the music is secondary. For this group, it seems that the music provides the backdrop for the “reconnecting” behaviors.

Along with sharing particular motivations for attending Americana music festivals that characterize participants loosely into these groups, they also share common interests in products that they consume and purchase at festivals. This interest in consumption includes the festival experience itself, and all this experience has to offer.

The next section explores the festivalgoer as consumer and how this consumer experiences the Americana music festival.

Festival Consumption Forms

As a consumption setting, the Americana music festival offers festivalgoers a variety of intangible “products,” including live music, a festive atmosphere, and even the positive feelings that they may experience from being part of a group. Festivals also offer an array of tangible products, such as handcrafted apparel, jewelry, craft beverages and food. Data suggests that the festivalgoer enjoys two “consumption forms,” namely the experience aspects of the festival (intangible) and physical marketplace offerings (tangible). Thus, two sub-themes emerged to help describe festivalgoers’ consumption: (1) *Consuming Festival Experiences*, and (2) *Products for Purchase*.

Consuming Festival Experiences

The idea of the creation of an overall festivalscape by festival organizers was discussed previously, particularly how Americana music festivals seek to produce unique memories and positive emotions among festivalgoers. For instance, Jimmy explains how *FloydFest* offers him a particular kind of experience:

J: For years I thought *FloydFest* was on the cutting edge of the experience. Those little intangibles, things that just don’t happen at other festivals, like setting up a huge trapeze, or this big gigantic dragon mobile with girls hanging off the big metal hoops, the fire-breathing chicks, the rope swingers [acrobats], just a myriad of things that, to me, it’s just trippy stuff that enhances the experience, especially after dark.

Noticeably, Americana music festivals often offer festivalgoers the opportunity to mingle directly with the musicians, which can help to create lasting and meaningful memories.

Jimmy discusses an experience whereby he had an unexpected opportunity to connect personally with one of the bands:

J: One of most special experiences I ever had, and you never know when this is going to happen, it may have been the first year we went to *Live Oak* [a Florida festival] and this band *Olabelle* was playing, and they are group of musicians that randomly met in Greenwich Village in NY after 911. They started having benefit shows with musicians showing up to play music just to help everybody [community from 911] deal with it. One of the members of the band was Levon Helms' daughter Amy and they were playing a set right in the sun and her hair was falling down and it was hot and so my wife gave her a hair doodad thing to keep her hair up. Well after the set she came out and walked around with us and hung out with us for like an hour and half and we talked about music, but she [Amy] never mentioned her Dad. And so we ended up following them for a while and we ended up helping them get connected to *FloydFest*. That's another fun part of the journey, discovering the next "new thing."

Importantly, the festival may be enjoyed purely for the overall experience. This includes embracing all of the experiential offerings. Burro describes what he likes about the overall experience:

B: I come to festivals to meet other folks, and drink some beer and take a nap and dance. I am one of these guys that have never met a stranger. I can pretty much carry on a conversation with anyone, or try to, so overall I've probably met a hundred people so far. I would say that I least know a hundred people here.

Beyond the social atmosphere, the experience can include the music and other attractions. In particular, Burro talks about how he enjoys listening to the music and even dancing:

B: The highlights so far have been the artists last night, especially the artist Anders Osborne and I am really excited about tonight with Karl Denson and the Tiny Universe [band]. In general, I am a big bluegrass fan, blues fan, not a big country fan but do like my George Strait. I have been to *Bonnaroo*, which to me is a large, flat, baking zone. I am originally from Virginia. So to be able to support these smaller regional festivals that are no less fun, I enjoy this area more. This is my second festival this year and lifetime this is my 6th Americana music festival, though I have been to a lot of beach music festivals in the past. The cool thing is that I don't have to drive six hours to go hear great music. Other activities: I enjoyed playing disc golf though I played this morning and my first drive was directly into a briar patch. But I will say I just love the music and that's why we are here and I like to dance, I love to dance.

I: How would you describe your dance?

B: That's just me letting go. It's probably more flat footing than anything but some moves I made up. You know it's all about getting jiggy with it.

In describing the experience, participants often used terms like “relax,” “unplug,” and even “off the grid.” Though a die-hard festivalgoer, Jimmy explains his rationale in attending *FloydFest*:

J: The truth is, this year I did something that I've never really ever done in my years of festival going. I honestly in all my years of going to festivals I did something really different this year at *FloydFest*. There was so much talk [from previous year festivalgoers] about “I'm not going because it was such a washout [extremely rainy] last year.” People were very disenchanted with the experience. Some of it was mud related or they didn't like the music or logistics or whatever, and I just, you know, decided I was going because I like the experience of camping on the mountain. I like camping up on the Blue Ridge in July and I like the fact that I rarely have decent cell service so I am off the grid and I am unplugged and I'm up there just like the experience and I liked camping and there was a music fest. And that was a departure for me because my passion is music.

Stafford shared a similar explanation of the intangible offerings of the festivals he attended,

S: The past couple of years I have really only gone to smaller festivals and they are family-oriented, community-oriented, which I like ...that smaller festival which you don't have to walk all over the place. *Rooster Walk*, I liked because they have carts to take you. I did go to *Merlefest*, which you have to walk all over the place.

The idea of enjoying music and relaxing in the outdoor setting seems to resonate with many participants, particularly with the older festivalgoers. Stafford continued,

S: I think they [festivals attended] all have good Americana bands. I'm at that 50 year old demographic so I am not wanting to stand in front of the stage and dance around as much, so the Americana music is more laid back and I can sit in a chair and enjoy the music instead of bouncing around like I was 20 years old and a lot more active...I like just sitting and watching so it is more conducive to that older demographic. I think it differs from some of those electronic dance music festivals where everybody is bouncing around and that is the purpose [of the festival]. [Americana] is not dance music per se.

Beyond relaxing, the diversity of sound and tempo offered at Americana music festivals is appealing to the older generation, yet there are offerings for the younger groups as well. Stafford describes this diversity and the appeal of it,

S: It seems like the purpose [of Americana music festivals] is about relaxing, enjoy[ing] the music, enjoy[ing] the vendors and don't expend too much energy. We [the festivals] are going to make it easy for you; energy expenditure is the phrase I would use; less energy expenditure for me is key. I think the beauty of Americana music festivals, especially some of the smaller ones, is that they can mix up the music like reggae and some alternative and stuff that can't really be classified. So I think it's a good mixture of bands that you can sit and watch and then something more high energy for the younger crowds that want to dance around.

Likewise, the different music styles represented by Americana, as a genre, is an important consideration for participants, as Bob explains,

B: What I like about the music is that it has a broad, eclectic range of music, and the fans can appreciate really talented musicians when they see them. So *Shakori* would have music that would range from hip-hop to bluegrass and anything in between. So you would see the same people dancing and having fun no matter what type of music was playing. So it's not like going to a bluegrass festival because there is such a wide range of music and everybody's having fun. The musicians are collaborating and seeing this great co-mingling of different musicians sharing instruments is a lot of fun and great to see.

Participants described the intangible offerings they experience while attending festivals. For example, festivalgoers talked about the sense of community they feel at festivals, both with the festival itself and from the local sponsorship support from area businesses. Other festivalgoers describe enjoying the social experience of the festival, whereby they make new social connections in this interactive setting. Furthermore, festivalgoers appreciate the festive atmosphere with a diverse group of people and a variety of musical artists. Yet, the intangible experiences are only a part of the overall offering by Americana music festivals. That is, the marketplace provides a wide selection of tangible products that festivalgoers can purchase and consume.

Products for Purchase

As part the experience itself, the festival provides many opportunities for festivalgoers to acquire a variety of consumer products in the festival marketplace. As discussed in the previous chapter, the festival marketplace offers a wide range of goods for purchase. This section explores participants' perspectives on these goods as well as provides insight on what interests them about the marketplace offerings at Americana music festivals.

One of the common points brought up by participants is the variety of products they seek out when at a festival. Sandy describes the marketplace offerings at different festivals she has attended:

S: Some are a lot better than others, but different areas have different things. Like Memphis, when we were down there, we saw djembes and handmade hair pieces, wooden things I guess from Africa, but a lot of hand carved things that you don't see at festivals here. Clothing, ethnic clothing, what do you call the clothes like Jimi Hendrix used to wear?

I: Like a serape or dashiki.

S: Yes. So you see a lot of those things at different festivals. You see those things at festivals outside of here, but you will always have the tie-dyes. Somewhere, I can't remember which festival, it may have been FloydFest, but they were like dog beds. They were huge, and you could lay down on them [laughs]. You know it's kind of like the music, you always find something different.

As discussed in Chapter IV, festival organizers strive to select vendors with artisanal appeal. Participants enjoy these authentic items and strive to support the smaller vendors. Moreover, this diversity of product offerings is often tailored to the particular festival setting and therefore offers functional appeal as well. Sandy describes her experience with these products during a festival she attended in Colorado where temperatures can change quickly:

S: Telluride is just a great festival. It's small and people camp right on the water on the river and it's like 80 degrees during the day and 30 at night. I mean as soon as the sun goes down, you have to start putting on heavy stuff. Speaking of vendors, there's a vendor there that sells tie-dye socks and they are the *best* in the world. And they are soft and they last forever.

Based on the data collected, it appears that vendors often seek to build a connection between their brands and festival consumers. Kelley, a vendor representing *Chaco*, describes a free giveaway *Chaco* product called a ‘wrist wrap’ that is available and very popular at the festivals they participate in:

K: It was huge. Well I think that the product, you know, the wrist wrap product connects so strongly to the brand. It is the same webbing that we use to make our sandals. If you were new to *Chaco*, if you experienced us for the first time at the festival, and you walked away with something for free that tied into the product, it was a very strong resonating give away, and if you were already a fan of the brand, you go “yeah, more of something I love!” and that’s hard right. So usually if you are a sandal company it’s not like we can give free sandals to everyone we met. If you are a makeup company, you could give away a free lipstick sample to everyone who comes through your booth. That’s really easy, the experience is really closed looped. But let’s say you sell sandals or say you sold paddles or something like that it’s really hard to have a giveaway for the consumer that ties so strongly to your product. You know, we’re fortunate.

Chaco is an example of a popular outdoor brand enjoyed by the festivalgoers. *Chaco* uses the festival to study its target consumer as it provides them a look at the product and a free giveaway. Kelley describes the *Chaco* consumer as one who feels strongly about the product and the brand:

K: I think that Millennials and young consumers in general are looking for brands to engage them in a way that’s meaningful and resonates with their personal values...our consumers are passionate about what is important to them. Consumers really tell me about their *Chacos*. They tell me about their products and what they loved. It was unprompted and it was great to hear their stories.

After seeing *Chaco*’s booth, I looked for festivalgoers wearing the sandals. In the interview with Joanie I recognized her sandals:

I: Are you wearing *Chacos*?

J: Yes.

I: How do you like them?

J: I love them a lot. Plus I like the replacement parts. For \$40 you send them in and can get them re-soled and the straps, the same thing. They stay on your feet. I bought them to go boating and then for festivals and stuff just to have. They stay on your feet. They do not come off your feet. So I really like them a lot.

Other outdoor gear, such as backpacks, hammocks and sunglasses are available and purchased frequently by festivalgoers. Joanie describes other outdoor gear she has purchased at festivals:

J: I also got my sunglasses at *FloydFest* last year. They're *Natives* and if you don't lose them if you scratch them or anything they'll replace them with a new pair. That's the cool thing about the outdoor products. You'll pay a lot for them, but they are worth it.

I: That is interesting. It seems like outdoor gear is more visible [at festivals].

J: Well yeah, like you get here [to a festival] and say, "Yeah I need that [outdoor] gear."

Along with outdoor gear, another popular product type seen at festivals is apparel in general, and specifically t-shirts. All of the festival marketplaces observed in this study included multiple t-shirt vendors. Cecil describes his affinity for one of the vendors, and t-shirts in general,

C: I mean who doesn't want a festival t-shirt? I mean who doesn't want something to help them remember how much fun it was at the festival? He's [the vendor] talented I think he has a good sense of creativity. I have bought two t-shirts from NB train and a *Rooster Walk 6* t-shirt. I have seen *NB Train* here before and kicked myself when I didn't get that t-shirt and particularly here, I like to get a shirt [from this festival] to keep up with the years I have been. That's my biggest problem at *Floyd*. I didn't buy t-shirts every year. So you have to go back and look at the line-up to see if you were there or not. They run out of those shirts. They ran out at *Merlefest*. You can't really blame them. They don't want to carry [too much] inventory.

Burro is another participant drawn to buying t-shirts at festivals. He describes his intended purchase based on past purchase behaviors:

I: Have you purchased anything here?

B: Hmm, well no I haven't, but I know for sure that I am going back to the *Southbound T's* guy. I got a shirt here last year and it is a Storm Trooper [Star Wars character] with cross-bones and it says, "The dark side hires another soul" [laughs], which is a *Grateful Dead* lyric. I have gotten so many compliments just wearing that around. So I think I am going to get something from him again.

Along with t-shirts, other clothing styles are popular, particularly with the female consumer. Joanie talks about how she likes to purchase skirts at festivals:

J: I've purchased a skirt. I like to get skirts because they make me feel pretty. He [boyfriend] bought me a skirt at the very first festival I went to with him and I like that he picked them out and I just love them [skirts]. So they kind of mean a lot to me.

She also buys clothing for others at festivals. She goes on to explain,

J: I got my kids a shirt, tie-dye shirts, and I think they are just interesting. No tie-dye shirts are alike and I appreciate the artwork and I am supporting them [vendors]. I got Sam [boyfriend] a shirt or two and Sierra [daughter] because this was a festival that we didn't plan to bring any of the kids to. So yeah, just something to have to remind us of our time here that doesn't necessarily have to have a logo on it but is really beautiful.

Other popular items enjoyed by female participants include jewelry, accessories and art items. This interest is also reflected in the number of vendors offering these goods. In an interview with Anna, she talks about what she plans to buy at the festival:

A: I haven't purchased anything yet, as it still the first day, but I would really love to buy a new pair of earrings though... When it comes to arts and crafts and the jewelry and stuff like that, the vendors that you get here are like not stuff that you see mainstream in just like box stores, so it's usually handmade and something you are not going to see from anybody else.

Another very popular type of tangible marketplace item is food. Festivalgoers shared that the freshness and uniqueness of the food available at the festival is what appeals to them the most. Stafford explains,

S: One thing I like about especially with the hippy or jam band influence, there's a larger population of vegetarians. And it's nice to while you are stepping out of your element to see some music and spend a weekend with some friends out of town. It's nice to step out of your food element too and maybe I might eat black bean burgers there and eat a hamburger at home because I make a terrible black bean burger. I like that element of food diversity. You can get a wide variety of food or even just the guy at *Rooster Walk* that just sold French fries. I mean vegetarians can eat them and everybody loves a French fry.

Other food offerings, some healthy and some not so healthy, are available in the festival marketplace. Burro talked about his intent to enjoy the options available:

B: As far as the food goes, they have some really good food options. I feel like the vendors that go around to festivals are pretty conscious about like having some nice healthy options and some delicious junk food too. The food is on point this year *Sugar Shack* is always a good choice and the *Bangin' Pies*, I had that. It was good. I haven't tried the other ones. I will definitely buy some food. I am craving a Veggie Thing [dish from Sugar Shack food vendor]. When I come to festivals I try to bring some money to buy from the food vendors and maybe like something from the arts and crafts vendors.

Likewise, craft beer is also very popular with festivalgoers. I observed large crowds at the craft beer gardens and a steady flow of people enjoying the offerings. In most cases, stages are set up within the beer gardens or clearly visible from the beer gardens. Cecil discusses why he enjoys the beer offerings,

C: That's one thing I like about *Floyd*, it's that they don't have *Anheuser Busch* or *Miller* or anything like that. I tell you what else I like about *Floyd* is they have been selling 16oz craft beers for \$5 since I can remember. They don't jab you too bad at all, and five bucks for a venue beer, I don't think is too bad at all.

Like Joanie's example of the skirts mentioned earlier, many participants use the marketplace as an outlet for purchasing unique gifts for others. For example, Stafford describes his festival shopping behaviors as follows,

S: I really go shopping. I mean, I take a pocket full of cash and I plan on spending on either buying a shirt or some CDs or maybe even buying some jewelry for a girl. I might even go Christmas shopping there for my friends of the same persuasion that like that kind of festival or music and get them something. I think they [festival vendors] have more crafts too in general. So, I could get wind chimes for my Mom at like a bigger festival like *Merlefest*.

The diversity of the festival marketplace offers participants opportunities to buy unique products, such as festival-specific or handmade items that may not be available anywhere

else. Interviews with participants point to how these factors really appeal to consumers in the festival marketplace. Stafford explains,

S: Even the smaller festivals, you have some unique crafts. And again that's what lends itself to the whole experience thing, the vendors are unique and something you don't see every day unless you are living in an artsy community. I have wooden guitar picks up here and I didn't even know that wooden guitar picks existed. I have given a couple of them away and shared the email [with friends] of the guy that makes them. Also I bought soap. Where else am I going to buy organic soap? It was pine tree scented soap so that uniqueness drew me to pay two dollars for organic scented soap versus 50 cents.

Other products that participants deem as festival essentials were powder, soap and baby wipes. Burro, for example, places a lot of importance on this kind of product:

I: Anything else you would like to share?

B: I will just say that Gold Bond [powder] is a festival essential, I promise you. I would go into discussion in detail but you probably don't want me too. You have to have it at festivals, especially when it's warm and [it's] day two or three [of the festival].

Participants in this study are clearly attracted to festivals for what they offer them as consumers. They view the purchase of festival products as unique to the experience, and as items not typically available outside the festival. For participants, it seems that outdoor products, t-shirts, and jewelry are most popular, along with food. The festivalgoers in this study seemed positive about the vendors and open and excited to try new products as well as support people whom they see as integral to the festival experience. Similarly, many like supporting the vendors because they recognize the effort and appreciate the hard work that goes into making the different products. Participants

are positive about supporting these entrepreneurs, realizing that these individuals are creating and selling products to earn a living. This support seems to align with the overall focus on the consumption of a festival experience that is positive, social, and supportive of the community.

Based on the data collected, three groups of Americana festivalgoers were identified based on their motivations for attending: those festivalgoers that are fanatical about the overall festival experience, those interested in the festive party atmosphere, and those drawn to the kinship aspects of the festival. Drawn to both tangible and intangible products, the festivalgoers as consumers appreciated both the experiential aspects of the Americana music festival, such as building new social connections, and purchasing festival-related merchandise and handcrafted artisanal products offered in the festival marketplace.

Summary

This chapter sheds light on the type of consumers that attend Americana music festivals and the products they consume. The two sub-themes of *Who is the Festival Consumer* and *Festival Consumption Forms* highlight the types of consumer groups observed in this study and the forms of both tangible products and intangible experiences consumed in the Americana music festival context. In the next chapter, I explore the theoretical considerations of the thematic interpretation chapters relative to the festival setting, the overall festivalgoer experience, and the community impact of the festival.

CHAPTER VII

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this chapter, the conceptual significance of the thematic interpretation is examined. Interpreting the experiences of the participants at the festivals observed in this study helps to explain the way in which the Americana music festival is constructed and the various factors that contribute to producing the multilayered experience of it. By synthesizing the experiences of the participants, I have illustrated how the Americana music festival is a lasting phenomenon that provides a platform for hedonic consumption in a purposefully created social setting. Likewise, interpretation of the experiences of the festival participants sheds light on meanings of consumption within the context of the Americana music festival. Moreover, the interpretation of participants' experiences within this context provides insight into what the Americana music festival means for the broader community.

In this chapter, the framework and questions that were discussed in Chapter II as important to guiding the research are examined through the thematic interpretation to elucidate meanings relative to the broader research goals and objectives of this study. As outlined in Chapter I, four research objectives were developed to guide this dissertation: (1) to explore the Americana music festival experience, (2) to investigate the role and meanings of consumption in this experience, (3) to examine how the Americana music festival functions as a marketplace, and (4) to investigate the ways that Americana music

festivals link to the local community. As highlighted in Figure 46, these objectives are linked by the interrelationships between experiential consumption in the Americana music festival setting, the meanings attached to these consumption experiences, and the impact of the Americana music festival on the local community, to form the basis of the conceptual framework.

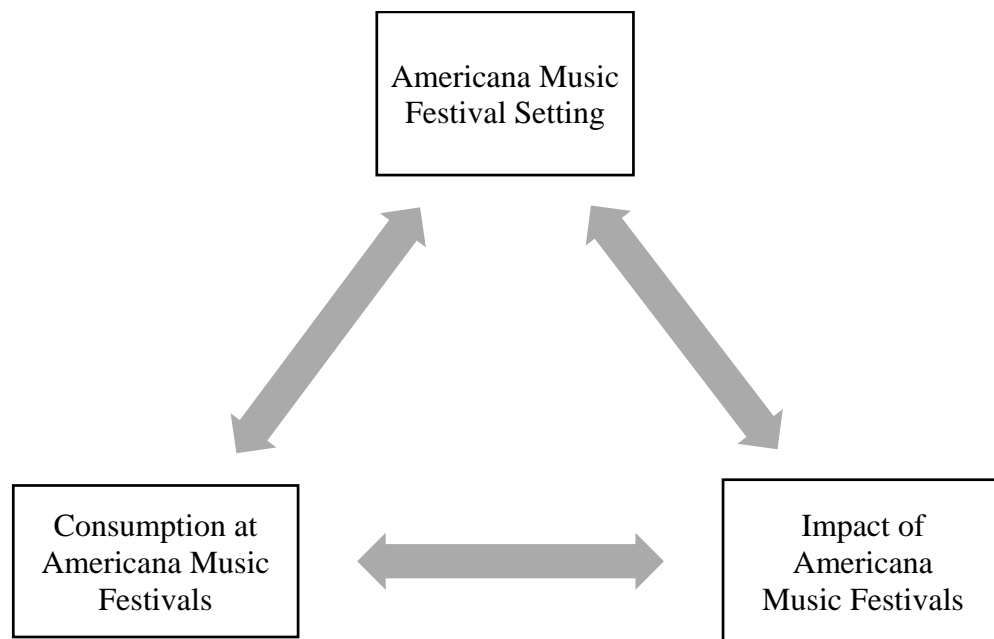


Figure 46. Conceptual Framework.

The framework includes the three components that were used to address the research purpose: Americana Music Festival Setting, Impact of Americana Music Festivals, and Consumption at American Music Festivals. To understand the overall consumer behaviors in the experiential consumption context of the Americana music festival, the two-way arrows shown in the framework represent the interrelationships among the components designed to address the questions posed by the literature review

in Chapter II: (1) *How does the notion of experiential consumption help to explain consumer behaviors and experiences within the Americana music festival marketplace?* (2) *How do consumers identify with others through consumption in the festival setting?* and (3) *What does consumption in the festival setting mean for festival impact?*

The conceptual framework guided the dissertation research in several ways. First, as the literature on experiential consumption suggests, consumption within the Americana music festival context extends beyond rational decision-making and is often based on affective motivations and emotions (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). The Americana music festival setting was examined to understand how the hedonic consumption setting is established and to understand how the overall festival experience is consumed. Secondly, the concept of the consumer self and group identification within the Americana music festival setting was examined to better understand meanings ascribed to consumption of products, services, and experiences within the Americana music festival marketplace. Lastly, the impact of the Americana music festival was examined from economic, socio-cultural and community perspectives via the framework.

The interplay between the three core concepts of setting, consumption, and community impact create a dynamic framework within which the purpose and objectives of this dissertation can be addressed. Thus, understanding consumption behaviors and experiences within the Americana music festival setting entails considering the broader impact of the festival as a whole. As a result, broader understandings of what festivals mean for consumer behavior and, conversely, what consumer behavior means for festivals, can be achieved. To this end, this chapter is divided into three parts: (1) *The*

Americana Music Festival as a Transformative Commercial Offering, (2) *Americana Music Festival Consumption Identity* (including self/group identification), and the (3) *Americana music festival as Communal Exchange* (festival relationships with stakeholders/community). Each is discussed in turn in the following sections.

Americana Music Festival as Transformative Commercial Offering

Ultimately the interpretation of data suggests that the Americana music festival setting has become a transformative commercial offering. In other words, the Americana music festival is a place where consumers can interact with music, marketplace and community in a temporary space that has been designed by organizers with the overall experience in mind. This transformative setting is one of fantasy and hedonism that allows consumers the opportunity to “transform” in their own particular ways. For example, consumers can escape the everyday for a short period of time or socialize in a constructed environment that allows for meeting other festivalgoers with like-minded interests. Three aspects of the evolution of Americana music festivals into transformative commercial offerings are used to frame further discussion of the findings: (1) *Festival Commodification*, (2) *Festival Customization*, and (3) *Festival as Transformative Setting*. Each is discussed in the detail below.

Festival Commodification

Seen as an opportunity to commercialize the popular music of the day, early festival organizers prompted the array of music festivals that are seen today, including Americana music festivals. Music festivals of the 1960s and 1970s are early examples of the commodification of the festival. That is, what was considered an everyday product

(music) was “re-packaged” as a new service offering (festival) to offer viable economic value in the market. These early festivals were based on music genres that included Jazz, Folk and Rock, with organizers offering the bands and music as a type commodity to the consumers (festivalgoers) in an outdoor environment.

While lesser-known festivals may have already existed, rock music festival organizers purposely structured their festivals to capitalize on the popularity of rock n’ roll music with the intent of making a profit. Historically, well-known festivals such as Woodstock and Monterrey Pops are examples of festivals that helped launch the idea of a packaged music festival into popular contemporary phenomenon. Additionally, many of these early festivals often attracted a counter-cultural crowd, as seen at Woodstock, that typically clashed with authority and consisted of participants that dressed and acted outside of societal norms of the times (Kitts, 2009). This consumer base became the first target market for festival organizers, though little formal knowledge was available about their consumption practices.

Americana music festivals, as revealed in this study, reflect elements of this evolution of commodification. Organizers have followed the same path in seeking to capture interest in Americana music by packaging it in the festival form to offer their consumers a product that is really an experience. However, as festivals have grown from their early beginnings as a novel commodity, modern day festival organizers take more calculated approaches in tailoring their festivals to deliberately appeal to their particular audiences. As found in this dissertation, organizers have garnered insight into their target markets and strive to structure their Americana music festivals in ways that appeal to

these markets through a variety of festival offerings and activities. Months of planning go into orchestrating the festival to provide a customized experience that goes beyond the product itself.

Festival Customization

Through the organizers' efforts to produce staged experiences that will attract new and repeat festivalgoers, customization of the experience allows for the festival to become more than a commodity. The Americana music festivals observed in this study reveal that customization of the festival goes far beyond the promotion of the music, to include customizing its overall offerings to appeal to the target consumer. For example, in an effort to attract patrons and extend the festival offering beyond the music, the festivals observed in this study all offer a variety of other activities (e.g., trail hiking, canoeing, art workshops, etc.) as well as the festival marketplace and amenities like exclusive camping options. Ultimately, instead of just offering a concert, the festival is designed to be a holistic experience for patrons.

The growth of Americana music festivals in general and those researched in this dissertation suggests that festivals exhibit elements of a "macro festival identity." Many of the festivals in this research were created with festival consumer interests at the forefront, including other common attributes such as remote physical locations that require camping, multiple stages featuring Americana artists, and the presence of local businesses, entrepreneurial artisans, and temporary marketplaces.

In particular, characteristics that align with the notions of being 'homegrown,' local, and community-based were common among the festivals observed. As discussed in

Chapter IV, many of the festivals have grown from organized field parties to formal events with or without a charitable cause. For example, the *Front Porch* festival began as a “going-away party for friends” and evolved into a sustainable non-profit venture with a formal business structure that is organized to support community charitable causes.

In addition to the music represented by Americana artists, the majority of the festivals are produced by teams of entrepreneurs that recognize the importance of the consumer as a loyal fan of not only the music, but also a patron of the social experience, setting, and the performances offered. Thus, festival organizers acknowledge the need to customize the overall experience to meet the interests of their particular consumers. For example, Kelley discussed the idea of incorporating brands that connect with the consumer and the festival experience.

K: ... this is a unique opportunity for the festival circuit and the festival environment to build and incorporate experiences for the brands into the festival experience.

Findings of this study build on this idea by revealing how festival organizers deliberately craft the overall experience to include elements, including products and brands, that resonate with the festivalgoers in the particular setting.

In turn, this effort has helped establish loyal festival consumers who are willing to pay for this “crafted” experience. As George puts it,

G: People are looking for an experience, maybe more than say, like taking a vacation to a physical destination somewhere. People are willing to spend their money on a trip to a festival.... I have planned my vacation around certain festivals every year.

As seen in the interpretation of data, Americana music festival organizers customize the overall experience through sustainable business models (both non-profit and for-profit) that allow them to generate revenue to fund the festival, pay staff, and even donate to charities.

While festivals are financially driven, there is an emphasis on the programming, specifically talented music artists that are representative of the genre. Yet, Americana music festivals seem to go beyond the programming aspects as they seek to establish their uniqueness through selective amenities in idyllic rural settings. For example, to appeal to their patrons' interests beyond the music, *FloydFest* prominently promotes a variety of higher-end camping options, VIP access with food and drink offerings, outdoor activities, and hands-on artisan workshops throughout the duration of the festival.

Similarly, Americana music festival marketplaces are carefully crafted to ensure distinctive offerings from artisans that are deliberately selected by organizers. That is, marketplace vendors are selected to ensure that their products connect with the Americana music festival consumer's interests. As Sarah shared, when organizing the marketplace offerings of the *Front Porch* festival, she is selective about market vendors that appeal to Americana music festival consumer tastes.

S: As you [the festival] kind of evolve throughout the years, your vendors probably have to evolve too. You have to provide ones that you know are going to be good for your demographic and what you are trying to do and not oversaturate the market... but then to also [allow festival goers the ability to] get some stuff they just can't get at Walmart.

In this sense, the marketplace is reflective of the overall Americana music festival experience. The idea that vendors are integral part of the overall experience is reflected in Jimmy's description of his attraction to the marketplace vendors:

J: You know the vending is part of the experience, I always check them out. I take time to always walk down and ask, "Where are you from?" There are certain vendors that I always make a point [to see]... It is kind of a rolling community thing that you see...

The idea of customizing the festival to appeal to festivalgoers as consumers is evident throughout the data collected for this dissertation. Moreover, as the festivals have grown, the level of customization has changed to meet consumer interests, with a constant focus on continuing to improve the experience. As a long time festivalgoer, Jimmy, explained:

J: For years I thought *FloydFest* was on the cutting edge of the experience. Those little intangibles...just a myriad of things that to me...that enhances the experience.

This type of a macro-festival identity, built on the idea of customization of the Americana music festival, is something that is important to all of the festival organizers that I spoke with. As a result, the festivals share the qualities of a consciously created hedonic space that is separated from "everyday life." This suggests that Americana music festivals are paying attention to their customers and their customers are noticing the customization of the experience, which, in turn, creates a lasting affinity for the festival and the festival host site (Gibson & Davidson, 2004). Yet, to many participants, Americana music festivals represent a phenomenon that goes beyond the customized experience to be one that is transformative in nature.

Festival as Transformative Setting

Findings of this study point to the ways that Americana music festivals seek to create settings that tap into the notion of transformation. Supporting Larsen and O'Reilly's (2009) idea of festivals as unique "utopian settings" where market, consumption, culture and the human spirit come together, the Americana music festival is seen as a type of utopian temporary space that allows the festivalgoer the opportunity to take his/her self out of the everyday and focus on personal well-being. As observed in this study, many festivalgoers seek to escape their daily lives and transform in some way. Although rarely mentioned in festival literature, the concept of transformative consumption relates to individual and group-level opportunities for consumption with the goal of improving consumer well-being (Mick, Pettigrew, Pechmann, & Ozanne, 2012). Beyond the commoditization and customization of Americana music festivals, this study reveals a deeper level of experiential manifestations occurring in the Americana music festival setting.

Pine and Gilmore (2011) propose that businesses can build experiences for their consumers that can allow them to transform themselves through the experience in terms of their well-being and spiritual growth. For example, the authors state that fitness businesses (i.e., fitness centers) construct an experience for consumers to improve their physical *and* emotional states which elicits something more desirable for their consumers than just the experience of going to the gym to workout. Findings of this dissertation indicate similar manifestations, in that the staged event, the Americana music festival, offers the consumer an opportunity for a guided transformation leading to a higher level

of knowledge, and even spirituality. This notion suggests that the Americana music festival may offer a cultural consumption experience leading to a positive change in the self. Consumers may consciously or unconsciously shift their focus away from the product (music) or event (festival) and transform their lives in some way, the most obvious being the creation of deeper social bonds with others. Thus, the festival experience offers a lasting means of consumption. To illustrate, Cecil explains an important personal aspect of attending Americana music festivals,

C: I think it's umm, as much about the community that sprouts up out of nowhere. I love the music and I love visiting with my friends, but then it seems like everybody here is super cool...being with people that are into the same thing that I am into is probably the biggest thing... I been coming here, nobody gets loud you know, everybody takes care of everybody else, no one tries to take advantage of people.

Cecil emphasizes the “instant” community that emerges at an Americana music festival. Clearly, the music is something he loves, but he also appreciates the bonds he forms in a “caring” environment with other patrons of similar interests. Emotional response from the positive environment goes beyond simply listening to a band and points to the fact that festivalgoers often associate on a more personal level.

Many participants exhibited a conscious awareness of their emotional states during the festival, particularly as related to the ideas of “escaping,” “relaxing,” and “reflecting.” This awareness suggests that Americana music festivals offer a higher order get away, perhaps even “salvation” for some. For example, Jimmy talked about the freedom to camp in the mountains unburdened by cell phone coverage.

J: I like camping up on the Blue Ridge in July and I like the fact that I rarely have decent cell service so I am off the grid and I am unplugged and I'm up there just for the experience...

Likewise, Joanie shared that her festival experience is important to her as it means spending quality time with her boyfriend and relaxing.

J: Mainly it's just to spend time with Sam [boyfriend] in a relaxed environment that fits him very well too... to get us out of our comfort zone... It's probably one of our most relaxing vacations.

These Americana music festivalgoers are engaging with the creative experience of the festival, or what Richards and Wilson (2006) describe as a transformative self-development opportunity. Experiences like this suggest that the Americana music festival, as a commercial offering, goes beyond the product and its customization to extend consumers the opportunity to achieve a deeper level of emotional satisfaction and connection.

In a similar vein, as festivalgoers are transformed, the notion of leisure being essential for personal well-being (Haworth & Lewis, 2005) is evident. It is clear that some of the Americana music festivals in this study trade on the ways that they can connect with this desire to transform. For example, *Lockn'* promotes its festival site as one with "mystical properties" that consumers can enjoy, stating:

The landscape of Lockn' has a mystical quality to it...The ambiance will come from the pastoral spirit of the land.

Festival promotional statements reflect similar understandings, offering festivalgoers settings to enjoy and experience the present. *Shakori Hills* states:

In the sticky depths of August, we long for autumn. The cooler air brings our bones back and awakens them from their slow summer slumber. We can't wait to cup our palms around warm mugs of coffee or cocoa and watch nature begin to close up shop, saving the most beautiful colors for the last show of the year. We love our spot here at the beginning of autumn, early October is a great time to gather with friends and come together to celebrate all that we have harvested this year and look forward to the next. Cool enough to bring out your sweaters for the night shows and enjoy a circle round the fire, but warm enough too, to play outside and enjoy what remains of the southern summertime.

This notion of moving from one season to the next, and the idea of looking forward with a sense of renewal and hope, point to the extent to which the Americana music festival setting is a transformative setting, prompting personal reflection as it provides space for building social connections.

As seen in the interpretation of the data, the Americana music festival is much more than an outdoor concert and camping trip. It is a place where festivalgoers can escape and undergo a positive personal change. The Americana music festival is an established setting whereby consumers can experience such transformation alongside like-minded individuals through a shared interest in the particular music genre. Indeed, the transformation may even be described as spiritual in nature. For example, a patron of *FloydFest*, posted the following on the festival website:

A wonderful serenity has taken possession of my entire soul, like these sweet mornings of spring, which I enjoy with my whole heart. I am alone, and feel the charm of existence in this spot, which was created for the bliss of souls like mine. I am so happy, my dear friend, so absorbed in the exquisite sense of mere tranquil existence, that I neglect my talents. I should be incapable of drawing a single stroke at the present moment; and yet I feel that I never was a greater artist than now.

Likewise, the *Front Porch* festival shares its vision of the spirit created by the festival, offering this statement on its website:

The festival is produced by a group of family, friends and funsters inspired by the idea that life is enriched by art, with music at its soul. Lovers of music come together in an intimate outdoor setting where the distinction between artist and audience is blurred. Our partnerships with community organizations brings not only hope for their cause but also allows patrons the opportunity to learn more about the initiatives that work so hard to do good in our community...

Clearly it is about much more than the music. Instead, these festivals are creating opportunities for the consumer to experience the setting as a transformative space.

Ultimately, consumers can enjoy more than just tangible and intangible offerings and actually use the experience to better themselves by reconnecting with nature, socializing with other like-minded individuals, and helping the community. In this sense, the Americana music 'Festival Identity' can be seen as an experience that is both fun and enlightening. Akin to spiritual enlightenment, the festival represents a "retreat" experience that consumers pay for to have an opportunity to feel better about themselves and others. Recognizing this potential, organizers produce festivals that are designed to promote it. Indeed, some of the festivals in this study have even incorporated "healing

arts” areas with massage offerings as well as contemplation/mediation gardens to cater to the festivalgoers needs as “spiritual beings.”

A focus on creating these transformative commercial offerings suggests that organizers seek to create a festival experience that goes beyond something that is represented by material goods alone (e.g., a logo t-shirt). That is, as transformative settings, Americana music festivals seek a longer lasting impact through personal growth and deep social relationships that connect the consumer with the Americana music festival at an emotional level. In turn, these emotional connections can potentially remain with the consumer to ultimately create loyalty traits such as positive word of mouth and repeat patronage behaviors (Thrane, 2002). The nature of the transformative commercial offering also suggests that organizers must continue to create a festival that authentically connects with its consumers so that these consumers see, hear, and feel the festival differentiation year after year. As festivalgoers transform, the festival must also transform, or risk becoming obsolete.

As this dissertation illustrates, Americana music festivals are indeed experiential consumption settings shaped through consumers’ emotional responses (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Zaltman & Wallendorf, 1979). That is, as the data illustrate, Americana music festivals, like musical recordings, popular culture, and the performing arts, are associated with leisure activity, to which consumers attribute a substantial amount of symbolic meaning (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Furthermore, products like festival apparel and related festival goods and services present an opportunity to examine relationships between the festival and consumer identity. McCracken (1986) suggests that

consumer goods (such as clothing) are assigned meanings by groups through their connections with social actions (such as festival attendance). Consumption experiences and the meanings related to identity within the Americana music festival context are discussed in the next section.

Americana Music Festival Consumption Identity

The data collected for this study, when interpreted thematically, offer an understanding of what the Americana music festival experience is like from a number of perspectives, including that of festival organizers who create the Americana music festival landscape, festival consumers who engage with the hedonic festival culture, and festival vendors who create a non-traditional retail consumption space. Synthesizing these experiences provides insight into the collective festival setting and highlights the ways in which Americana music festival consumers engage in the festival context to establish their own particular “culture of consumption” (Kozinets, 2001). As seen in the thematic interpretations, Americana music festivalgoers consume in ways that reflect their individual identities, yet, at the same time, express group-related meanings within the Americana music festival context. To further explore the meanings of festival identity, three concepts are addressed as a means to structure this section of the chapter: (1) *Symbolic Interaction*, (2) *The Self*, and (3) *The Group*. Each is examined in turn.

Symbolic Interaction

Festivalgoers shape their identities in part through participation in Americana music festivals. They do this by consuming tangible and intangible products such as handmade, artisan-crafted goods, non-mainstream music, and undergoing

transformational personal growth. Important to the development of these identities is the use of symbolic interactionism and its value for understanding the Americana music festival consumers' experiences.

Blumer (1969) suggests that Symbolic Interaction means that individuals exist not in the physical space composed of realities, but in the "world" composed only of "objects" that can be divided into three types: physical objects, social objects, and abstract objects (Blumer, 1969, pp. 48-49). Symbolization highlights the processes through which events and conditions, artifacts, people, and other environmental features take on particular meanings. In this case, the Americana music festival is constructed from elements that reflect the meanings of the festival. Based on Blumer's taxonomy, the festival is comprised of physical objects (setting, bands, marketplace), social objects (social spaces, social interaction), and abstract objects (transformational or spiritual experiences).

A common way that the Americana music festival can be communicated symbolically is through the festival logo t-shirt, which the festivalgoer can purchase not just as a remembrance of the festival but as a badge of "having been there" for the experience. Cecil, a festivalgoer explained,

C: I mean who doesn't want a festival t-shirt? I mean who doesn't want something to help them remember how much fun it was at the festival?

Cecil links the intrinsic value of fun and enjoyment at the festival with a t-shirt that represents his attendance. Although t-shirts are perhaps the most common symbolic objects representing the experience, another participant, Joanie, discussed the idea that

the apparel purchased at the festival does not have to be a t-shirt or even have a logo on it,

J: So yeah, just something to have to remind us of our time here that doesn't necessarily have to have a logo on it but is really beautiful.

Joanie suggests that apparel purchases can represent the positive time spent at the festival, thereby becoming more than simple physical objects.

Other participants view their interactions with the artisans in the marketplace as a way to understand the festival experience. Stafford described this aspect,

S: Even the smaller festivals, you have some unique crafts. And again that's what lends itself to the whole experience thing, the vendors are unique and something you don't see every day, unless you are living in an artsy community.

Stafford's affinity for shopping at the artisan vendors points to the role of the festival marketplace in the overall experience and the meanings it has for the festival itself. As Connell and Gibson (2012) discuss, what makes festivals in general distinct is that they are usually held annually and generally have social rather than economic or political aims. These aims include getting people together for fun, entertainment and a shared sense of camaraderie. Like the Americana music festivals in this study, most festivals create a time and space of celebration, a site of convergence separate from everyday routines, along with experiences shared through meanings that are ascribed to products and services related to this experience.

The ways that festival participants assign meanings to their consumption experiences reflects how consumption is shaped in a social way in the Americana music

festival context. That is, the festival marketplace establishes a social space wherein festivalgoers can interact with products, vendors and other festivalgoers allowing for the shaping of meanings. Thus the Americana music festival is consistent with Blumer's (1969) suggestion that individuals use social interaction to attach meaning to objects or actions to a certain idea or phenomenon. Likewise, as shown in this study, some of the extreme tendencies of festivalgoers to seek out authentic clothing, music and other symbolic items support the idea of the "fixated consumer" as one who is focused on seeking lifestyle choices that confirm his or her links to the festival experience (Kane & Zink, 2004).

Americana music festivals promote the overall festival in ways that highlight the symbolism associated with these events. As discussed in previous chapters, festival organizers promote all of the amenities, marketplace offerings, music, etc. that serve as symbols for their patrons. These symbols offer the means of interpreting the experience of the festival and provide insight into how individuals relate to the festival.

The Self

It is clear that the participants in this study construct aspects of their identities within the Americana music festival setting. As discussed earlier, at a deeper level, festivals are a way to cater to the desire among consumers to get away to fulfill a "self-need." For example, the act of leaving one's mundane day-to-day life behind allows an individual to "escape" and become his or her "festival self," which seems to be a deeply rooted expression of freedom. In expressing individuality, festivalgoers will seek consumption opportunities that help them maintain and develop this sense of liberty.

Consequently, festivalgoers can use the overall festival experience as an anchor for constructing who they are as individuals. Moreover, festival consumers that wish to define their identities may be attracted to the products and services that only the festival marketplace can offer.

Festivalgoers in general can use music as a “badge of identity” (North & Hargreaves, 1999) and attend music events in order to construct or express a sense of identity (Goulding, Shankar, & Elliott, 2001). This was found to be the case for the American music festivalgoers in this dissertation. Testing their actions in “safe” alternative environments allows these consumers to seek meaning and shape their identities through hedonic consumption. For example, Figure 47 portrays the festival identity of the participant known as “The Burro.” An engineer during the week, he escapes his everyday reality by transforming into his festival persona within an environment of acceptance.



Figure 47. The Alternate Festival Identity.

Joanie suggests that the primary motivation of the festival “persona” is to express personal freedom in an unrestricted setting,

J: It seems like the more weird they look, the more awesome they want to be. I think it’s a mixture of, I [festivalgoers] can just be all out and it doesn’t matter. I don’t really think it’s a self-absorbed thing, I think it’s more of a free-spirited thing.

For example, Fern, a homemaker who is at home with her kids during the week, travels to festivals, wears a flowing dress and other festival related attire and hula-hoops all weekend to Americana music. Fern escapes her everyday through her festival identity, much like Bryce, mentioned above, an engineer during the workweek, who dons a sombrero and serape and becomes “The Burro” during festivals.

These festival identities are openly accepted and frequently seen from festival to festival. Individuals are often validated by their festival identities, as Cecil, a school principal in his non-festival life, shared:

C: People that are into the same thing I am into, I think, it is probably the biggest thing. It validates me. I think all the time, you know my wife thinks I am a little crazy, but damn there’s 4000 people out here that think just like I do. Who’s got the problem? [Laughs]

For Cecil, consuming the festivalscape helps him forge his identity in total and being around others with similar interests validates this identity.

According to Firat and Venkatesh (1993), the system of consumption becomes central to the existence of the individual in as much as products foster the process of identity creation. Likewise, the consumption of festival products becomes a personal

quest that can represent the festivalgoer as an individual. Joanie expresses this idea in the following,

J: Buying things at festivals is more personal for me. I don't have friends that go to festivals to get their wardrobes like I do. I like buying things at festivals because they are original and they remind me of the experience... It reminds me of the time I had... it makes it worth it.

Buying products at festivals helps differentiate Joanie's personal identity from that of her friends that "don't go to festivals for their wardrobes." This points to the idea that festival consumers seek to extend the everyday self (Belk, 1988) to include the "festival self" through their dress, actions and other behaviors. Thus, festivalgoers are able to construct their own "Americana music festival identities" by and through their involvement in the Americana music festival consumption experience.

Findings of this dissertation offer a look at the constructed identities of the Americana music festivalgoer, which is not currently available in the literature. In many ways, like the festival experience itself, festivalgoer consumption seems to be motivated by a need to establish one's self as "different" or "separate" from the outside world. Yet, consumers seek to be the "other," "different," or "hip" in their own ways even within the festival setting. As one festivalgoer states, "you have people with the glow sticks in their hair and the big feather things...there was girl dancing in front of us with the sequined underwear with her ass hanging out." As a result, there is a type of two-fold identity differentiation occurring: differentiating from non-festivalgoers and differentiation from other festivalgoers within the festival setting.

Two examples illustrate the different types of festival identities seen while highlighting the common thread found at the Americana music festival: Anything goes. Figure 48 depicts Joe, a festivalgoer, who was consistently observed throughout the four-day festival with a stuffed monkey he called “Major Domo.” Joe wears his monkey throughout the festival as a way to stand out and to portray his individualism. Due to the festival setting, others are very accepting of this behavior. Another example, shown in Figure 49, depicts a festivalgoer dressed in a bear costume, which the wearer believes represents his “animal spirit.” An outward manifestation of his own unique festival identity, yet one that is accepted as normal within the festival confines.



Figure 48. Festivalgoer with his Stuffed Monkey.



Figure 49. Festivalgoer in Bear Costume.

As consumers, participants in this study clearly use the Americana music festival as a means to formulate and express their individual identities. They do this by presenting themselves to others, both inside and outside the festival in particular ways that make statements about their values and attitudes, and express their views of the world (Hargreaves, Miell, & MacDonald, 2002). In this sense, consumption at Americana music festivals is as important for its functional or practical value as it is for its symbolic value, especially relative to the identity of the individual. However, strong associations between individuals at festivals suggest a communal link that compliments the individual identity,

which ultimately helps to forge festival-related group identities within and outside of the festival context.

The Group

The Americana music festival offers consumers an interactive environment that is conducive to supporting social groups driven to consume the music, goods, services, and even the overall shared experience. This idea supports Mackellar's (2009) findings of music festival consumers' use of similar music and clothing as a type of "reflective lifestyle" to establish group identity and facilitate social interactions. The environment, in turn, allows consumers to form bonds with each other and with the event itself.

Social Identity Theory suggests that individuals categorize themselves into specific social groups, thereby allowing them to articulate their experiences within the social order (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Defined as the process whereby an individual orders his/her social environment into groups, social categorization is important to motivations behind social identity. Consequently, social identity entails enhancing one's self-concept by gaining membership in a social group and, as groups are formed, social comparison occurs among individuals comparing themselves to others based upon their group affiliations (Bagozzi, 2000). This comparison contributes to group distinctiveness and involves differentiating a particular group from other groups based on unique group characteristics and norms. According to Social Identity Theory, as individuals confirm membership in a group, a sense of identification leads to practices that reinforce the group's interests as a whole (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Participants observed in this study expressed this sense of group identity as communicated through the loyalty to the festival shared among festivalgoers and the deeper levels of connection subsequently established. Responses of participants, such as, “seeing the same people year over year only at festivals, yet, picking up where they left off,” point to the familial-like bonds that are formed, and, consequently develop into a long-term commitment to the overall festival by consumers. Within the festival context, group identification occurs in spaces designed for this purpose, such as common gathering areas, camping sites and interactive stages.

As the interpretation of data suggests, collective experiences enjoyed by festivalgoers as a group fosters a mindset established around shared hedonic consumption pursuits. In discussing the group bonding process, Chris shared his thoughts on the connections that festivalgoers tend to make with each other:

CO: It is similar to seeing someone that has the same interest as you in a baseball team. Yes that’s right, if you see them out on the street with their colors on you say “Oh hey” and sit there and talk about baseball for 30 minutes and never know their name and that's a common bond with that person.

This shared interest is common among festivalgoers, whether it is the bands, the festival location or other aspects that identify the particular festival as “appropriate.” Moreover, the interpretation of the data suggests that this group identification is emotionally driven and can be temporary based on the festival duration and proximity of social space, such as the campground. Joanie made this point clear,

J: I like connecting with people that are here in our area [campsite neighbors]...I may feel emotionally attached to them and then don't know how to say goodbye. Like I'm not going to keep in touch with you so then I feel kind of guilty. Like you know. "I just got to know you and then it's nice knowing you." I'm very social, so it's hard for me not to connect to people but I know I can't sustain the relationship... the people around your campsite, you want to have them feel comfortable with us and us feel comfortable with them because we are essentially one sheet of nylon away from each other.

Building connections with like-minded others illustrates how consumers create and confirm their social identities within the Americana music festival group, and particularly so during the festival. As Stafford describes, even though he is not part of the "everyday" group he can identify with his "festival friends."

S: Well even though I might not be part of the main group, I like being part of a place where I can meet up with people, friends, where that is the only time I do see them is at a music festival, because either geographically we live too far away, or we're caught up in our own lives.

Connecting with these "festival friends" confirms Stafford's acceptance into this social order. Stafford continues,

S: Even though I am not networking for any end means, I have really met some nice people that I want to continue seeing. I have expanded my network of friends and they are just festival friends for the most part, but it is good to see them twice a year or three times a year and it's good to see them. You know, it's people that might not know my name, but he's going to remember my face next time and we will sit and drink and talk trash for the next three hours and watch the bands.

In a similar vein, Burro sees the festival as an opportunity to not just connect with others, but to meet new acquaintances,

B: I come to festivals to meet other folks, and drink some beer and take a nap and dance. I am one of these guys that have never met a stranger.

Establishing group connections fosters a certain 'kinship' among festivalgoers as they experience the festival offering. Moreover, establishing these social bonds through shared interests allows for a type of community network. As with the individual's extended festival identity, group festival identities are formed based on the festival experience rather than the social status hierarchies that exist outside of the festival. Bob shares his attraction to festivals in this regard,

B: [Laughs] Gee-what's not to like? Generally, the kinds of festivals I like anyway are a good mix of people in terms of, you know, socioeconomic backgrounds, in terms of ages, a little bit of everything you know. I like seeing a good mix of people bridging all these gaps, people that may not otherwise mix with people everyday, you know, getting out to the festivals where everyone gets together and everyone is having a good time. And that's really the key to what makes a festival fun, is people walking around smiling. Smiling, singing, laughing, joking, having fun is really what its all about.

The festival environment mediates the various individuals and their respective personalities and social status to facilitate festival-based relationships. This higher order engagement supersedes the normal social boundaries separating people outside the festival. In describing festivalgoers in general, Burro explains the common essence of the group:

B: Well I try not to judge folks, I mean I know all the people I camp with and can probably bounce around from camp to camp and see someone I know. But I would describe them overall as some of the most welcoming [people] and just like, basically, family. I mean these people will give you the shirt off their back if you need it.

Based on the data, it appears that Americana music festivals provide a hedonic consumption space wherein cohesion of community is fostered through experiential consumption and consumer interaction. Festivals can transform individuals' psychological processes by group membership and provide the sense of distinctiveness or differentiation that individuals seek from being part of the group. As Joanie describes, "talking with other musicians, networking, it's just a great way to meet up and spend a day or two or three with your friends and experience a common experience."

As findings indicate, an Americana music festival group identity can also be seen. Specifically, group consumption of the festival experience is similar to that of a tribal experience. Chris, a festival organizer, supports this idea when he explains group participation at the festival as "tribal driven."

CO: I think for me I've said for a while, one of the reasons music festivals have gained such popularity, if you look at humanity throughout history, tribal culture have been a much bigger part of human society and sociology than anything else. Everyone of us, every race of people in the world was tribal at one point and really, a lot of them [tribes] not that long ago in the grand scheme of things, like a 1,000 or 2,000 years out of 150 thousand years of existence. That's a very small amount of time.

Chris' idea that "people," (i.e., like-minded festivalgoers) form a type of festival tribe was evident in nearly all of the festivals observed in this study. Groups that follow certain Americana music festival bands such as "the Tribe," "the Herd," etc., have become modern-day, self-appointed festival tribes.

Cova (1997) uses the term "tribe" related to consumption as the "re-emergence of group attachment to antiquated values connected through a place or local sense of group

identification based reviving the community model of a village” (Cova, 1997, p. 300).

These tribes are communities that are not clearly definable in spatial terms and are often temporary, as seen within the Americana music festival setting. In what can be referred to as “postmodern communities” (Maffesoli, 1996), these festival tribes are often small-scale and are not permanent according to the established constraints of modern society. Instead, they can be held together through shared emotions, shared lifestyles, and shared consumption practices or experiences.

Festival tribes can also be formed through symbolic links, such as the Americana music acts, the transformative setting, or the marketplace. Within the festival, the tribes resemble a collection of societal micro-groups (Cova, 1997), in which individual tribal members share strong emotional links with the music and other festival family members. Proudly, these micro-groups form a common sub-culture. In some cases, belonging to these tribes has become more important than belonging to a modern social class due to the collective desire for the festival experience. In his many years of organizing festivals, Chris has repeatedly seen this notion of the Americana music festival tribe:

CO: Because of those things, like festivals...are very attractive to people because of that tribal aspect. Whether or not you are into music, or it could be a football team or whatever. Festivals and people band together to get around a common purpose or a common thing, whether it is positive or negative. It is in our nature to pursue a venture, to get with a group of people, on a tribal level, that are like-minded and try to achieve that goal.

The festival space can provide opportunities for closeness that are not always common in everyday life. As a result, bonds are formed between festivalgoers. Like a type of religion, individuals transcend their daily lives to establish membership in the

tribe through their like-minded motivations and behaviors. As one festivalgoer noted, “People are creative in the way they decorate their campsite. It’s like they make it theirs. We’ve seen people work hard together. We’ve seen people fail together. We’ve seen people fail and then do it better next time. There is some engineering going on.” At the festivals observed in this study, groups of festivalgoers were often seen working together to set-up and customize their camping areas. Many campsites were set-up as “mini-villages” with colorful flags, tapestries, lights and other objects that signified their camp as specific place for their group/tribe. Oftentimes, due to their proximity to other mini-villages, these tribes build connections with each other over the course of the festival.

Soloman (1992) posited, “many businesses owe their successes to the ability to support this form of tribal or ritualistic consumption in situations taking place over time” (p. 529). Moreover, Cova (1997) contends that a sociocultural trend or societal innovation (such as the Americana music festival phenomenon) can help define social links and support collective consumption opportunities that affirm them. Clearly, the Americana music festival provides an innovative forum for tribal consumption behaviors and group identities.

Americana Music Festival as Communal Exchange

Due to the extent of stakeholder support required to produce an Americana music festival, communal exchange among stakeholders is critical to the overall festival orchestration. As such, collective exchanges occur between members for resources often as “in-kind” donations or with little expectation of monetary repayment. These practices were commonly observed at the festivals studied, and reflect the concept of communal

relationships posited by Clark and Mills (2012). Extending Goffman's idea of social exchange theory, Clark and Mills suggest that the nature of communal exchange is based on "exchange benefits that are given without the donor or the recipient feeling the recipient has an obligation to repay" (Clark & Mills, 2012, pp. 232-251).

Americana music festival communal exchanges often have an economic value in the form of donations, goods, or services that are given without the explicit expectation of being paid back monetarily. Yet in many instances, donations received by festival organizers are often repaid through other means. Payback may often come in the form of recognition, promotion, and other "in-kind" forms of reciprocation for the donor before, during, and/or after the festival. This is consistent with Clark and Mills' (2012) notion that while re-payment based on communal relationships is not expected or explicit, many times due to the communal nature of the relationship, there may be reciprocation based on being responsive to the other party's welfare, particularly if the relationship is based on a long-standing communal or shared strength.

As an example, a long-term donor that has been involved in supporting a festival since conception and has built a close relationship with festival organizers may willingly donate money and services to support the festival with no expectation of repayment. However, due to the long-term relationship that has developed, festival organizers may arrange for the donor to receive VIP tickets for the festival along with other festival-related merchandise. Other forms of reciprocation may be offered such as promotion of the donor's business during the festival. On the whole, festivals positively impact stakeholders and the broader community in which they are held (O'Sullivan & Jackson,

2002; Small, Edwards, & Sheridan, 2005; Sundbo, 2004). In this case a “win-win” situation is established among trading partners to effectively implement the festival.

Whether held annually or bi-annually, festival organizers seek to create a sustainable business model that ensures the longevity of the event over time and this usually requires collaboration between festival organizers and local communities (O’Sullivan & Jackson, 2002). The Americana music festivals observed in this study all employed a business model that relies on the support of host community stakeholders. These communities provide a number of resources, including land, support personnel, and services. For this reason, the organizers of festivals observed in this study all involve community stakeholders in the region during the planning and implementation of their festivals.

Festival stakeholders generally include local governments, area tourism boards, art councils, non-profit organizations, and area residents. Festival organizers draw resources from these groups to help them host and produce the festival, supporting the notion that festivals interact with local economies and communities, and activities generated by festivals contribute to the principles of sustainable local economic development (Sundbo, 2004). As such, communal relationships are established as organizers reach out to members of the host community through social media, direct mailing and personal soliciting.

All of the Americana music festivals in this study rely on communal exchanges to execute their festivals at various levels. From the donation of the land for the festival sites, to volunteer labor, to large sponsors, organizers seek to leverage their community

connections. In turn, the festivals bring recognition to the host areas, support and promote secondary businesses, and even provide general goodwill through their volunteers. As one volunteer described, “So yeah, it’s kind of like, it’s my community. I think the most important thing is really just supporting what they are doing and just think being a part of that is important.” Others recognize the value in the communal exchange. As Anna points out,

A: If nothing else, this festival is an important gathering time for the community to come together behind one thing that happens every year and like work toward it...and um yeah I think it really builds a lot of bridges between people in the community and just brings people together since the textiles and furniture manufacturing went away ...

For the festivals observed in this dissertation, community support is critical to the festival’s overall success, in that negative perceptions by stakeholders can prohibit short-term goals and long-term sustainability.

In many cases, trust must be gained between parties, particularly from the community side, as these representatives must be convinced of the legitimacy and benefits that come from hosting the festival. Fredline and Faulkner (2001) revealed that positive perceptions of a festival among residents are more likely when they have a higher involvement in or identification with the festival theme. Supporting this perception, Chris, one of the chief organizers of the *Front Porch* festival, described the evolution of trust that developed between this festival and the host community:

CP: This community [we have] is very giving. You know we had less than 50 sponsors [in the beginning] and now upwards of 100. The first three years the community and us, too, were struggling trying to determine our identity in the community. But now people are starting to recognize that we are not joking around and we are here to do good, and support and give back and I think we have really seen a lot of support from community members and the tourism board.

Community backing can take the form of sponsorships from area businesses, buy-in and promotion from the tourism board, and even private donations from community members.

The importance of establishing these communal relationships is particularly critical for the smaller festivals that rely on up-front investments to start and sustain them. Burro, who volunteers with three smaller festivals in Virginia, shared his experience with garnering support from the community in the early phases of festival orchestration:

B: I attended a workshop at *Shakori* where they talked about their success and the concept of slow money. I really liked the idea of slow money for investing in festivals, whereby local supporters invest back into the festival and thus the community. I really like the idea of slow money versus investment back into the stock market for a quick buck... You have to have the right infrastructure and you have to know the right people, and you have to have some influential people. Anytime you want to throw a festival on a larger scale you have to have the buy-in of your local government, local county and make sure all your permits are signed and sealed... It's a real challenge sometimes for non-profits because you have to continuously generate revenue to be sustainable.

For the smaller non-profit festivals observed, the need to generate cash ahead of the festival is always a critical issue. Funds must be available to book artists, reserve equipment, and secure the festival infrastructure. For the organizers I spoke with, early

campaign efforts are a major focus, whereby organizers and staff actively seek sponsorship months before the festival actually took place.

In addition to money, the community may provide “in-kind” support to help the festival. For the festivals observed, outside of the normal ticket sales for regular festivalgoers, bartering between festival organizers and other businesses occurred frequently. For example, a local print shop donated its printing services in exchange for free advertising in the festival program. In other cases, equipment rental companies provided discounts on equipment in exchange for promotion at the festival and exclusive VIP access for staff. Likewise, community volunteers worked a set number of hours to assist with a particular function of the festival, (e.g., a volunteer may work two 5 hour shifts). These volunteers are then provided free access to the festival, music, as well as camping. As a result, community support was clearly evident for all of the festivals observed. *Rooster Walk* seemed to have the largest outpouring of community backers. Anna shares her experiences on this topic,

A: I know from having worked here for a while, when it’s like *Rooster Walk* weekend, most organizations in town are contributing in some way. Everybody is gearing up for *Rooster Walk* to come as a booth or vendor or to represent his or her organization. There is a ton of buy-in, which is great to see. This festival has a lot of big donors that have businesses that were created and have grown in this area and those people are definitely on board with sponsoring and helping out the festival.

Clearly, without community support, festivals will struggle to be successful. As discussed, smaller festivals need broad levels of support, especially capital backing, whereas mid-level to larger festivals rely on varying levels of support, usually in the form

of sponsorships and services. Regardless of festival size, the host community provides distinct services, such as volunteer labor, medical and security services, and natural resources, which all festivals must have to operate. As communal support and trust is established, festivals can continue to build and grow, and in return, find ways to give back to the communities that support them, which helps to further secure communal bonds.

Indeed, the Americana music festivals observed in this study sought different ways to give back to the host community. This giving back takes both tangible and intangible forms. In some cases, festivals give an actual monetary donation to fire departments and local law enforcement agencies for their services. Moreover, once the festival is finished, organizers often donate some or all of the proceeds to fund their particular non-profit causes. For example, Sarah, one of the *Front Porch* staff organizers, shares her organization's mission in partnering with the community,

S: We created this non-profit to highlight our area and raise awareness and money to combat community deterioration. It is about what other people we can work with to improve the community as a whole...we also created a global awareness village for organizations to come in and share what they are doing to help the community.

Partnering with the “right” non-profits was a common topic among organizers of the smaller festivals. In the case of the *Rooster Walk* festival, Anna highlighted the importance of reaching out into the community to establish these kinds of reciprocal communal relationships and addresses the needs of the host community:

A: The non-profit that this festival came out of was a memorial for the two people that died really young and every year they donate money to the local high school in the form of scholarships for high school students. They do a really great job of bringing in non-profits. For example, they brought in the *Dan River Basin*, a watershed conservation group and they do a good job with promoting recreation in the area and eco-tourism and economic development kind of stuff. They come in every year and do a booth in the kid's area and provide some environmental education stuff. I would say they [the festival organizers] do a really great job of making community connections.

The outcomes of such partnerships can be financially substantial. For example, organizers estimate that *Rooster Walk* has given over \$72,000 to local causes since its inception in 2008. For the larger festivals such as *Lockn'*, contributions to the community can reach into the millions, normally in the form of charitable donations to the local host county. Other tangible benefits are the tax revenues generated, as well as the positive financial impact from an increase in tourism in the host community. Overall, the festival and host community establish a cooperative relationship in the attempt to provide the various stakeholders a share in the financial benefits created.

Chris, a festival organizer, talked about the importance of donating to the organizations that align with their goals, in this case, helping smaller non-profits:

CO: You want to pick organizations also that may need it [our donation] more than others. I mean the local Rotary club has a lot of local members so they would not benefit as much, but the smaller non-profits will. We want to pick areas that align with our beliefs.

The idea of choosing the non-profits that most align with the festival size and vibe was more obvious at the small and mid-level festivals observed. Moreover, this fact was not lost on the patrons. Stafford described his experience at festivals he attended:

S: So they [the festivals] give back to the community in really good ways. Even the small festivals, like *Front Porch*, I saw them promoting and giving back proceeds from the parking to the Patrick County food bank. I was happy to give ten bucks especially to a charity that's not like United Way and they have a CEO and all this stuff. With the food bank you are feeding people and it's local and it is a lot easier for me to give my money to a local charity. I think the fact that festivals are becoming a non-profit is really good, whereby they can stay somewhat smaller and stay connected locally. What I don't see as much except at *Merlefest* is all the civic club tie-ins like the local Boy Scouts and other civic clubs.

Beyond the tangible benefits, these reciprocal communal exchange relationships also create opportunities for local businesses to sell and promote their products and/or brands. Likewise, many non-profits are given marketplace space to promote their causes during the festival. Intangible benefits are created for the host community, and the festival itself, in the form of establishing the host location as a tourist destination for future visitors, as well as overall goodwill between the festival and members of the local community. Additionally, area residents can attend the festival as patrons or can volunteer time during the festival in exchange for a free ticket.

When festivals are planned in conjunction with local stakeholders, they are considered to be important form of economic development, due in part to the considerable amount of potential income they can generate (Getz, 2010). This creates opportunities for higher involvement among stakeholders and encourages communal relationships. This economic potential is clearly exhibited by the festivals included in this study. While donations from festival stakeholders align with the concept of communal exchange, wherein donors do not expect repayment, Americana music festivals have created ways to establish continued community support and goodwill through

reciprocation. Building a network of community connections through communal exchange was found to be a vital element of festival success and highlights the social benefits for all involved. The Americana music festivals observed in this study are models for the theory of communal exchange, and findings provide insight into an aspect of festival experience that has yet to be explored in the existing research.

In conclusion, this chapter discussed the broader theoretical issues that emerged from the interpretation presented in the previous three chapters. As illustrated by the conceptual framework, the Americana music festival setting, consumption at Americana music festivals, and the impact of Americana music festivals combine to help define what it means to experience the Americana music festival. Each of the three components of the framework (Americana Music Festival Setting, Impact of Americana Music Festivals and Consumption at American Music Festivals) help to address the questions guiding the research by revealing how experiential consumption frames consumer behaviors and experiences within the Americana music festival marketplace, how consumers identify with others through consumption in the festival setting, and how festival consumption has community impact.

To address the question of experiential consumption and the Americana music festival, the literature suggests that consumers are motivated by and willing to pay for consumption experiences and that they want to experience something based on feeling, learning, being and doing (Pine & Gilmore, 2011). Based on the findings of this study, there is clear evidence to suggest that Americana music festivals have emerged and evolved into transformative commercial offerings that seek to cater to a variety of

consumer behaviors and experiences within this context. These transformative settings are deliberately crafted to include a variety of customized marketplaces, music, and outdoor activities.

Likewise, this research extends the interpretive significance of Getz's (2010) suggestion that festivals in general embody emotional experiences that lead to the pursuit of leisure. Findings of this dissertation point to the ways that Americana music festivalgoers consume the Americana music festival experience to recreate, listen to music, socialize and even self-actualize through seeking higher order experiences that are offered by festival organizers. According to Gration, Raciti, and Arcodia (2011), festival consumption and self-concept is an "under-researched" aspect in festival studies. The findings of this dissertation suggest that self-concept can be enhanced through festival consumption, especially for consumption of the Americana music festival as an experience.

Regarding the question of how consumers identify with each other and the festival via consumption, findings regarding the pursuit of leisure in the Americana music festival context support Stebbins (1982) concept of the serious leisure practitioner "fully vested" in leisurely pursuits. Stebbins posits that serious leisure is pursued as a way of enjoying personal fulfillment, as well as enhancing one's identity and mode of self-expression. Findings suggest that consumption behaviors in the Americana music festival context are motivated by consumers' needs to establish their own unique festival identities and to connect with others through a shared festival identity. In this group consumption setting, distinctive group identities are shaped through interactions with like-minded others, often

taking on a tribal form and aligning with symbolic objects (Cova, Kozinets, & Shankar, 2007). Findings suggest that tribal consumption practices relative to Americana music, and to the overall experience, illustrate group identities that operate with the larger whole.

Lastly, the literature shows that links with community, local business partnerships and social responsibility are key factors in determining the success of a festival (O'Sullivan & Jackson, 2002). Findings of this dissertation point to the extent to which successful Americana music festivals go beyond a pure business-based transactional relationship to seek to establish long-term relationships with stakeholders through communal exchange. Findings indicate that these reciprocal communal exchange relationships are a lasting factor in building continued goodwill among the host community, business partners, and festival organizers which allows for the Americana music festival to continue year after year.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the broader issues that emerged from the thematic interpretation of the data. I began with an explanation the Americana music festival evolution, going from festivals as a commodity in the beginning stages, to the customization of the festival, to the creation of a transformational commercial offering in which festivalgoers have the opportunity to interact in the festival environment, consume the experience, and even transform themselves. I then examined how consumers attach meanings to tangible and intangible objects within the Americana music festival setting as a way to relate to the festival, shape their personal identities and form group

identification, specifically festival tribes. Last, I examined the role that communal exchange plays within the Americana music festival context. In the next chapter, I reflect on the research process and findings as well as provide suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER VIII

REFLECTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this dissertation was to understand consumption-related behaviors and consumer experiences within the Americana music festival context. In this dissertation, I sought to explore the Americana music festival experience, investigate meanings of consumption within this environment, examine how the Americana music festival functions as a marketplace, and investigate the role of the Americana music festival relative to the community. As a result, this research addresses gaps that exist in the literature by examining how the Americana music festival is crafted as a site specifically for hedonic consumption (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982) and in turn, provides insights into how consumers experience this consumption environment.

Participants' involvement in various roles related to the festival, from festival organizer to festivalgoer, sheds light on the Americana music festival phenomenon as a unique experience. These insights point to the Americana music festival as a transformative market space, one that attracts individuals by its tangible as well as intangible offerings and one in which these individuals can express their identities and connect with like-minded others through social activities. Moreover, the connections established by the festival organizers with the host community are also important to understanding the Americana music festival, as they are essential to laying the foundation for future festival success. In this chapter, I reflect on the process used to achieve the

objectives of this dissertation and discuss the implications of the study's findings for future research on the topic.

This chapter is organized in two parts: (1) *Reflections on the Process*, and (2) *Implications and Future Research*. In the first part, I reflect on the process of data collection and interpretation related to the research purpose and objectives. In the second part, I discuss the implications of the key outcomes that emerged from the interpretation, and suggest future areas of research based on these outcomes.

Reflections on the Process

For this dissertation research, I employed an interpretative ethnographic approach to examine experiential consumption and understand the ways this consumption shapes identity. The ethnographic approach allowed for these concepts to be studied within a particular hedonic leisure setting (Arnould & Price, 1993), that of the Americana music festival. To understand experiences within the Americana music festival, I collected data across multiple festivals during one six-month festival season. In total, I attended ten Americana music festivals ranging in duration from one to five days. A range of sites were targeted, as I attended small-size festivals (~500 – 3,500 participants), mid-size festivals (~5,000 – 12,000 participants), and large-size festivals (~15,000 – 30,000 participants). I spoke with a range of festival participants that were connected to the festival experience via multiple roles. These roles included festivalgoers, organizers, marketplace vendors, and artists/musicians. For all the festivals attended, I observed the participants closely reflected the demographics that were highlighted in Chapter VI. Specifically, there were typically a high percentage of Caucasian participants ranging in

age from mid-20s to mid-60s that were college educated with the gender ratio slightly higher for male participants versus female participants.

I recruited participants live while in the field during festivals as well as before and after the festivals that I attended. During the festivals, I conducted in-depth interviews with participants to understand consumption experiences, the construction of the festival experience and creation of the marketplace. I sought to understand the experiences of festivalgoers as consumers as well as the perspectives of organizers, artists and marketplace vendors. Interviews outside of the festival were conducted in person with festival organizers that I contacted directly or that were referred to me by other participants during a particular festival.

Depending on the role of the participant, I began interviews with open-ended questions related to experiences within his or her specific area of involvement. For example, an organizer was asked, "Tell me what it is like to organize an Americana music festival." The open-ended questions allowed for a diversity of perspectives to emerge across a number of topical areas. These perspectives were recorded and analyzed for the interpretation. Throughout the interviews, I sought to maintain a neutral position and to be an active listener, remaining open to all responses and any content that was conveyed. In some cases, if responses were short, I deliberately paused or asked follow-up, clarification questions or probed for further discussion. For example, when asked, "Tell me about his festival experience so far," Cecil responded with simply, "All-good." My response in situations like this was to prompt further depth, such as, "How so?" or "What has been good?" This typically would encourage participants to elaborate more.

Recorded interviews were scheduled at times that were convenient for the festival participants, which assisted with data collection and resulted in more complete and thorough interviews. For example, some of these interviews were conducted at the festivalgoer campsites during the morning hours before the music began. Other participant interviews were field interviews that were more informal in nature whereby notes were taken to document the participant feedback. Recorded interviews were taped with a handheld recorder with a microphone and lasted from forty-five to ninety minutes. Recorded interviews then were transcribed verbatim. Field interviews were typically shorter in nature lasting an average of 20 minutes. Field interviews were documented with hand written fieldnotes. To supplement the recorded and field interviews, other data collected included photographs and fieldnotes.

Employing an ethnographic research design allowed me to immerse myself within the Americana music festival environment to establish myself as an insider. Volunteering for pre-festival preparation, camping on-site for multiple days at the festival, meeting other festivalgoers and conversing with festival artists and vendors provided me with a “lived” perspective of the festival experience while it allowed me to establish contacts for interviews. Though considered an insider at times, I also had to maintain an outsider, “researcher” perspective to effectively conduct the research (Van Manen, 1990).

At times, both as an active festival participant and as a researcher in the field, I had to establish a level of trust with the participants interviewed. In the field, participants were sometimes wary about the motives behind my inquiries, thinking that I may be a “competitor” or “the police.” For example, when soliciting an interview from a festival t-

shirt vendor employee at *FloydFest*, he pointedly asked, “Now tell me again, why do you want to do this?” and quickly referred me to the boss/owner. At festivals where the demographics were younger, such as the *Big What*, the twenty-something participants often looked me at with a “suspicious eye” until I clarified my role in the field. I learned quickly to explain my position as a student-researcher and to discuss the scope of my study when meeting prospective participants, which eased any tensions and seem to make them more comfortable with my role. In many instances, after explaining my role, participants wholeheartedly agreed to share information and often ended up considering me one of their “festival friends” or part of their extended “festival family.”

Personally experiencing multiple festivals through the application of the ethnographic methodology, along with the breadth of data collected, provided me with a wide array of perspectives used to explain the Americana music festival phenomenon. The breadth of data offered a well-rounded understanding of consumption experiences and assisted with interpreting the intrinsic meanings of festival participation.

During the interpretation of the data, I examined the collection of participant experiences to understand meanings of the Americana music festival. I sought to discover the essence of the Americana music festival as a hedonic consumption experience and to understand how participants engage with this particular experience. While each participant provided a distinctive perspective, comparisons of these perspectives among and across them revealed similarities that were used to identify themes. The themes that surfaced in the interpretation were structured into three chapters: *Crafting the Festival*, *The Marketplace*, and the *Experiencing the Festival*. As discussed in the next three

sections, within each of these, I sought to organize and synthesize the information to illustrate the dimensionality of perspectives to offer findings that help address the gaps in the literature.

Crafting the Festival

In the chapter focused on *Crafting the Festival*, participants involved with creating Americana music festivals of all sizes shared their insights in order to explain the efforts required to produce an Americana music festival. Beginning with *Festival Ideation*, participants often discussed starting with an idea and transforming it into a sustainable venture while seeking to maintain an entrepreneurial spirit along the way. For example, organizers from the *Rooster Walk* festival shared how their festival began as an idea to “honor two friends that passed away too soon,” and then grew into a formal, multiyear, non-profit business that now operates year-round to support community charities.

Findings related to festival orchestration point to the idea that, while differences exist among the festivals, such as size and type of business, a formalization of the festival as a legitimate business anchored by the Americana music genre is well established. Each festival recognizes the need to establish formal business structures as their festivals grow. Findings indicate that festivals are the result of efforts of organizers, volunteers and community stakeholders. From the smallest festival such as *Bushels and Barrels* to the largest, such as *Lockn'*, each utilized volunteers to support their operations along with the services of the community.

When discussing festival orchestration, the data revealed a strong desire among organizers to create a unique atmosphere or “Festivalscape Collective” for festivalgoers to experience. In turn, this Festivalscape Collective is recognized by festivalgoers as an aspect to be enjoyed at the Americana music festival. Participants discussed their loyalty to the musical artists, their attraction to the outdoor festival environment and their support for the communities and social causes on which the festivals were founded. For example, participants interviewed at *FloydFest* shared their love for the “old-school” Americana music artists as well as their interests in “discovering new artists.” Moreover, participants expressed their enjoyment of the Americana music festival as a means to escape, relax, and connect with others. Such findings further substantiate the Americana music festival as a hedonic consumption experience and highlight a key motivation for festival attendance.

Finally, with respect to festival orchestration, findings illustrate how the Americana music festival is a temporary consumption space, and in itself is ultimately the final product to be experienced by consumers. This interpretation of the Americana music festival as a collective festival space that is designed and implemented for festivalgoers to experience in a variety of ways offers new dimensionality to the existing festival research.

Findings of this dissertation suggest that a form of interrelationship exists between the Americana music festival as hedonic consumption environment and as transformative commercial offering. That is, the Americana music festival is designed specifically to cater to consumers’ hedonic consumption needs, such fun, fantasy and

amusement and does so in ways that provide a temporary space in which transformative experiences may occur. A festival consumer may be drawn to a particular Americana music festival due to the music and marketplace offerings. Within this festival setting, he or she may then undergo a transformative experience through interacting with others, expectedly or unexpectedly, and with nature to form deeper levels of personal connection with the self and/or others. For example, festivalgoers interviewed at *FloydFest* spoke of attending their first music festivals solely to hear Americana music artists, but once they were absorbed in the environment, they found themselves becoming connected with others and forming long-lasting “festival” friendships.

The Marketplace

In the chapter devoted to *The Marketplace*, configuration of the Americana music festival marketplace, the product offerings, and vendor involvement were discussed as important factors when planning a festival, as well as attending one. Each highlights the nature of the Americana music festival marketplace as characterized by local and handcrafted products made by artisan vendors. Findings reveal the mobile nature of these vendors, along with a shared desire to create unique products that appeal to festival consumers through an affiliation with and love for Americana music festivals. Key findings that emerged in this chapter reflect the nature of the marketplace in that the market space is a series of *Bazaar Arrangements*, the products are *Colorfully Handcrafted Locally*, the market is orientated toward a *Spirited Outdoor-Lifestyle*, and the vendors are characterized as *Pop Up and Go Retail*.

In all of the festivals observed for this dissertation research, the marketplace is noticeably distinct in that it lasts a short period of time, and is patronized by consumers that only have a limited time to buy products that are available. Conversely, the sellers have a short timeframe in which to sell their products. This helps to create a very temporary, yet interactive, marketplace where buyers have direct access to sellers, and this access is fueled by an atmosphere of immediacy, in that vendors and customers have only a few short days (or one day) to interact. Participants shared their thoughts on what makes the marketplace unique, including the distinctive products, the sense of community among vendors, the unusual retail format and mobile lifestyle of the vendors affected by the marketplace.

It is important to highlight that the marketplace is positioned within the pleasurable atmosphere of the Americana music festival, which serves to enhance consumers' overall experience of it. Thus, in addition to the music offerings, the marketplace was found to be an integral part of the overall Americana music festivalscape and consumption experience. Furthermore, the findings illustrate not only the importance of the vendors to the marketplace but the vendors' recognition that Americana music festivals serve as specialty markets for their target customers. Based on observations, the proportion of different consumer groups at all of the festivals was relative to the size of festival. This suggests that vendors may have the opportunity to define and align their product assortments to cater to a particular target consumer within the festival or to differentiate their offerings among consumer groups. For example, a

vendor may target the *Here for the Party* segment of festivalgoers to develop and sell particular products that appeal to this group.

While the importance of branding the festival location as well as the impact of brand sponsorships at festivals have been suggested (Leenders, 2010; Rowley & Williams, 2008), the importance of establishing and promoting brands that connect with Americana music festival consumers has been overlooked in the literature thus far. As an example, vendors of well-known brands may seek to promote products that specifically resonate with the Americana music festival consumer. Moreover, this provides an opportunity for increased cross-promotion between brand sponsorships and particular festivals, which would allow for increased awareness of the brands and the festivals among consumers.

Experiencing the Festival

In seeking to understand festivalgoer experiences, the chapter dedicated to *Experiencing the Festival* explained the primary motivations to attend Americana music festivals. The particulars of the Americana music festival consumer offer insight into where they come from and what draws them to the festival. Goals for consumption while at the festival were also examined. Findings show that consumer motivations range from being drawn by the music, to attending purely for the party aspects of the festival, to using the festival experience as a means of reconnecting with festival “family.”

Based on these motivations, three “profiles” of the Americana music festival consumer were developed from the data: *Super Fester*, *Here for the Party* and *Family Seekers*. While motivations for festivals in general have been empirically measured in the

literature (Crompton & McKay, 1997; Lee, Lee, & Wicks, 2004), qualitative studies have rarely been utilized to classify festival consumers by motivations. The categorization of the Americana music festival consumer in this study supports the use of the ethnographic approach employed in this dissertation as it allows for a deeper understanding of what motivates consumers to attend such events (Holloway, Brown, & Shipway, 2010). These profiles can be used as a starting point in further exploration of the Americana music festival consumer.

Findings indicate that broadly, festivalgoers seek enjoyment from two consumption forms: the intangible and the tangible. That is, participants discussed how intangible aspects are as important to them as the physical products available in the festival marketplace. Both types of consumption point to the experience itself as a pleasurable, memorable leisure experience as well as an opportunity to buy actual products that symbolize this experience beyond the actual festival. This interpretation sheds light on the overall festival experience as well as consumption experiences particular to the Americana music festival. Although interpretive studies have been used to explain the consumers' experiences within the festival marketplace in general (Kozinets, 2002), the findings of this dissertation offer an in-depth look at how the Americana music festival is a unique form of experiential consumption.

From a theoretical or conceptual perspective, the study provides a framework for interpreting the Americana music festival setting, the meanings of consumption at the festival and the impact of the festival. Findings specifically shed light on the ways the American music festival functions as a *Transformative Commercial Offering*, and one in

which consumers rely to share symbolic meanings for individual and group identification. The extent to which the Americana music festival relies on *Communal Exchange* among “trading partners” creating the festival community is also revealed by this study. In turn, such concepts allow for an understanding of the broader significance of the data and the interpretation of it presented here.

Ultimately this dissertation helps explain the consumption experience of festivalgoers and illuminates consumer behaviors within the Americana music festival marketplace. Festival organizers place importance on creating a “unique marketplace” that offers “artisan-crafted goods” to appeal to their particular consumers. Conversely, consumers seek out positive experiences with vendors across the festivals and genuinely appreciate the marketplace offerings. Moreover, this study sheds light on how consumers both create their own identities and relate to those of others through consumption in the Americana music festival environment. Festivalgoers spoke of “transformational” experiences related to connecting with others and “feeling better about themselves” due to being part of the festival. Moreover, festival organizers discussed the importance of “community bonds” between the festivals and the host communities.

In summary, each thematic area provides one part of the overall interpretation of participant experiences and helps to explain the creation and impact of the Americana music festival, the construction of the festival marketplace, and consumption experiences and meanings of the Americana music festivalgoers. Together each part forms the whole of the lived experience of the Americana music festival phenomenon.

Considering the relatively few qualitative studies of music festivals, and especially as experiential consumption settings, as well as the paucity of research on the experiences of music festival organizers, music festival consumers, and music festival marketplace participants, this dissertation provides a comprehensive investigation not found in the current literature. Findings highlight the complex nature of the Americana music festival through the economic, social, psychological and communal elements that are associated with the experience and articulate how each of these elements are interwoven to create a unique cultural consumption phenomenon. In the next section, I discuss the implications of the findings for theory and practice, and suggest areas for future research related to the findings.

Implications and Future Research

As shown by this dissertation, the Americana music festival can be seen as a transformative commercial offering that is created by organizers for consumers to escape to a remote location, connect with others, and explore new experiences. In this sense, the festival goes beyond its physical offering and, in turn, is an example of a viable consumption model that is truly experiential in nature. That is, the festival is a consumption experience whereby consumers feel emotionally connected to the product, and in this case, a collection of hedonic products. Participants talked about how consumption of the festival itself allows for a kind of “spiritual space” that draws them in, helps them reconnect, recharge and establish an on-going loyalty toward future festivals.

Consequently, this study reveals how important it is for Americana music festival organizers to be aware of how consumers are inspired by the experience in order to find ways to continue to create innovative, transformative spaces. As revealed by this study, the Americana music festival is a very sustainable model in the growing experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 2011). This finding bodes well for rural communities that may want to consider how the Americana music festival can promote them while helping to bring in resources to support their distressed economies. That is, the successful festival business models observed in this study may offer potential for other rural communities that have suffered job losses.

Much like the idea of “serializing” creative tourism opportunities to produce cultural tourism experiences proposed by Richards and Wilson (2006), future research may consider the creation of a blueprint for an Americana music festival model that may be applied across communities. This blueprint could be designed to engage stakeholders, including government, non-profit and for-profit ventures in achieving economic development goals. While this idea is not currently discussed in the literature, smaller “grass-roots” festivals often coordinate with mid-size festivals to informally share “best practices” and in some instances even share resources, such as security services. Research that aggregates these best practices could serve as an effective tool for practitioners looking to host, promote, and produce Americana music festivals. Furthermore, the research suggests that Americana music festival organizers could determine specific benefits of attending their festival, such as specifying specialized vendor offerings (e.g. unique pottery), or amenities unique to the festival (e.g. hot showers and covered

shelters) to create more targeted advertising to not only differentiate themselves from other festivals but to also appeal to the various consumer segments.

On a different note, this study helps to shed light on the central role of consumption relative to the Americana music festival. In particular, participants discussed how festival products, both tangible and intangible, help them shape their identities within the festival setting. An interesting aspect of this finding is the fact that individuals deliberately used the transformative space of the Americana music festival to escape their everyday, wherein they can become their “festival identities.” Festivalgoers exhibited “alter egos” to establish, test, and shape their identities within the festival. This form of personal freedom to create a distinct festival identity is also used as a fun and socially accepted way to connect with other like-minded festival “personalities.”

This presence of group norms within the festival setting is a key finding that emerged from the study. Indeed, tribal consumption practices (Cova, Kozinets, & Shankar, 1997) were present throughout all of the festivals observed. Festival tribes are formed based on symbolic linkages, such as shared interests in a specific musical artist or band, or a particular festival location. The Americana music festival is an ideal setting for tribal consumption in that the festival brings individuals together as a group and offers a way for them to connect and consume the overall experience together. Participants see each other as “tribe” members and engage in ritualized tribal practices, such as wearing similar festival clothing, camping together in themed campsites, or following the same band from festival to festival. The idea that Americana music festival tribes consume products and experiences only during a temporary time frame suggests the interdependent

relationship between these consumers and the Americana music festival offering itself. This is an occurrence unique to the festival, as it is not seen within the traditional forms of consumption spaces, such as retail stores.

Further understanding of how different groups shape festival construction and consumption offerings, as well as interact and engage with the festival is needed. Thus, future research related to tribal consumption at festivals may consider effective methods to market the festival offering to specific “tribes” or groups. Likewise, research is needed to explore the perceptions and importance of brands affiliated with these tribal consumers. Such research would offer a better understanding of how festivals may connect with these groups to build further loyalty that can benefit the Americana music festival. For example, a band with a loyal fan base that consistently travels to multiple locations to hear the band, such as “The Herd” tribe for *Donna the Buffalo*, could be studied for specific customized service and product offerings that may appeal to them. This would allow for a deeper understanding of Americana music festival tribes as well as provide festival organizers with insights into the interests, activities, and lifestyles of their target consumers. Consistent with this idea, other tribes may be examined as well, such as environmentally conscious consumers, consumers that frequently travel to festivals, and consumers that are outdoor enthusiasts. Further exploration into brands that connect with these specific groups is also needed.

Although this research provides an initial view of the marketing aspects of the festival from the point of view of the festival organizer, further consideration may be given to Americana music festival marketing practices from the perspective of consumers

and particularly as it relates to the usage of technology. Although the degree of electronic marketing strategies varied across the festivals in this study, future research may include:

- An investigation of the types of social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) utilized to understand how festivals target consumers as well as interact and create relationships with their consumers.
- Examination of promotional strategies involving technology utilized by the festival to help maintain contact with the festivalgoer throughout the year.
- Netnographic exploration of festival website use.
- Content analysis of festival websites for shared features, attributes and marketing messages.

Research that is quantitative in nature may be employed to understand the technology being utilized. Moreover, other quantitative methods could be used, such as post-festival on-line surveys, to capture consumer data on motivations to attend the festival as well as the economic impact of the festival.

It was found that the Americana music festival is the result of a communal exchange between the festival and the surrounding community. Therefore this dissertation elucidates the reciprocal nature of the relationship between a festival and the community, as well as the importance of stakeholder support for ensuring success. This support can come from the community in the form of both “in-kind” donations and monetary donations for the short-term and long-term.

Findings highlight how, usually with the understanding that reciprocation is not expected, the festival by nature of its offerings seeks to repay the community by helping

to establish it as a destination location, and, in turn, help local businesses in the host location flourish. These businesses, in turn, receive greater visibility through participation in the festival. Likewise, the festivals often used local resources for staffing the festival needs. For the most part this reciprocation is positive in that many participants spoke of the goodwill created between the festival and the community. However, because this dissertation focused on the festival and its participants from an internal perspective, future research could explore the viewpoint of community donors by investigating their perspectives on participation in the festivals. Examining the topic from an external angle would shed light on donor motivations and behaviors and point to the perceived benefits (or consequences) of a community's involvement with an Americana music festival.

In conclusion, examining Americana music festivals as a particular form of hedonic consumption provides an in-depth look at the breadth of festival experiences and meanings. Festival organizers create entrepreneurial models that provide the festivalgoer with a transformative consumer space. Festivalgoers are motivated by experiential consumption in a variety of ways, as they use the festival experience to shape their identities and connect with others who share similar goals for the experience. Marketplace participants play a vital role in facilitating the overall festival experience by providing unique products that connect with the festivalgoers' interests, lifestyles, and values. At the same time that the Americana music festival fosters its own internal community, it establishes and maintains a relationship with the external community, which ensures its ongoing sustainability.

As this dissertation illustrates, the Americana music festival goes well beyond the simple act of hosting musical artists performing a popular genre of music at an outdoor venue. That is, it is far more than an outdoor concert. An Americana music festival is a social and cultural consumption phenomenon within the emerging experience economy, and one that has lasting meanings and value for consumers and communities. Ultimately, the Americana music festival offers a path leading to new frontiers of consumption in need of exploration.

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APPENDIX A
IRB APPROVAL FORM



OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE
2718 Beverly Cooper Moore and Irene Mitchell Moore
Humanities and Research Administration Bldg.
PO Box 26170
Greensboro, NC 27402-6170
336.256.1482
Web site: www.uncg.edu/orc
Federalwide Assurance (FWA) #216

To: Nancy Hodges
Cons, Apparel, and Ret Stds
213 Stone Building, Campus, Greensboro, NC 27402-6170

From: UNCG IRB

Date: 7/05/2012

RE: Notice of IRB Exemption

Exemption Category: 2.Survey, interview, public observation

Study #: 12-0220

Study Title: U.S. Regional Americana Music Festivals - An Exploration of Festival Consumers and Suppliers of Apparel, Consumer Goods and Services

This submission has been reviewed by the above IRB and was determined to be exempt from further review according to the regulatory category cited above under 45 CFR 46.101(b).

Study Description:

This research will give a better understanding of consumer and supplier festival attendance, apparel consumption and retail behaviors related to product and service offerings.

Investigator's Responsibilities

Please be aware that any changes to your protocol must be reviewed by the IRB prior to being implemented. The IRB will maintain records for this study for three years from the date of the original determination of exempt status.

CC:

Thomas Turner, Cons, Apparel, And Ret Stds
ORC, (ORC), Non-IRB Review Contact

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Interview Schedule: Festival Attendee

1. Describe your experience at this festival so far. What has been the best part?
Least favorite part?
2. Do you always attend this Americana music festival? Why? Why not?
3. How many festivals have you attended? Lifetime/this year.
4. What festival activities have you participated in?
5. What is important to you about coming to this festival?
6. Have you purchased anything at the festival? If so, what prompted you to buy it?
7. How far have you traveled for this festival? For other festivals?
8. Is there one word that describes this festival for you?
9. Have you noticed any non-profits? What are your thoughts about the festival support for community causes?
10. How do you feel about big companies sponsoring the festival?
11. Are you here with a group?
12. Do you attend the festival to connect with others?
13. Do you buy things here that your friends buy? Why or why not?
14. Is there anything else that we did not talk about that you think I should know?

Interview Schedule: Festival Vendor

1. How many festivals do you attend each year?
2. Are you displaying your goods at this festival? Please describe what you sell.
3. How far do you travel to sell your goods?
4. What do you like about selling your goods at these festivals?
5. Is this your primary occupation? If not, what is it?
6. How is this festival experience going for you?
7. What do you like/dislike about the festival setting? Do you work closely with the festival organizers?
8. Where are your goods made?
9. Do you think the festival supports the community? Why/why not? How?
10. Do you compete with the other festival vendors? Why/why not?
11. Tell me about who buys your goods. What is your target customer like?
12. Do you plan to return to the festival next year? Why/why not?
13. Do you like how the marketplace is set-up? What do you like/not like?
14. Do you like where you are located in the festival setting? If no, what would you change?
15. Anything else, you may want to tell me that we have not discussed.

Interview Schedule: Festival Organizer

1. How long have you worked with the festival?
2. How did you get started with festival organizing?
3. What community causes does the festival support?
4. If so, is community support important to this festival?
5. Tell me about a typical festival preparation.
6. What is it like to manage the festival?
7. What are your biggest joys/headaches with running the festival?
8. How do you select the vendors? Do you work directly with them?
9. What do you think about the vendor offerings?
10. How would you describe the festival attendees that come to the festival?
11. Tell me about the artists you bring in for the festival. How do you select them?
12. What activities do you provide?
13. How do you insure safety and security?
14. Tell me about your relationships with your festival sponsors.
15. How do you measure the success of the festival?
16. What are your goals for this festival?
17. Do you plan to organize this festival again next year? Why/why not?
18. Anything else you would like to discuss that we have not talked about?

Interview Schedule: Festival Performer

1. Have you enjoyed playing at this festival?
2. Anything you like or dislike about the festival?
3. How do you arrange to play this festival?
4. Which festivals do you enjoy the most? Why?
5. How are the organizers to work with?
6. Do you like to interact with the festivalgoers? Other performers?
7. Have you purchased anything from the vending areas?
8. If so, what prompted you to buy the goods?
9. How many festivals do you play per year?
10. Do you stay on-site?
11. How has your music been received by the audience?
12. Why play festivals versus clubs, etc.?
13. Do you consider your music/sound “Americana”? Why/why not?
14. Anything else I should know that we have not already discussed?